

Business Schools and Universities in Saudi Arabia

A stakeholder view of reputation

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the
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Acknowledgements

I am Ibrahim Alharthi, and my name appears on the cover page of this thesis.

However, it is actually not that simple; my name is simply shorthand for the collective effort required to make this research happen.

Back in 2010, I came to Liverpool with my parents and my wife to attend the graduation ceremony for my online MBA from the University of Liverpool. My mother said: “Ibrahim, this is a nice city, come and do your doctorate here”. The journey that led to this thesis being completed started at that moment.

Without your endless support, my parents, nothing would have moved forward. Your love, prayers, and passion for my work have always lit my path. It is your smiles at my graduation that will make all my efforts worthwhile.

Once, I read a preface, in which the author’s children were addressed, thus: “Without you; this could have been finished years ago”. Sumayah, my wife, and Ghadah, Ahmed, and baby Sara, my children: In my case I cannot imagine how I could have worked without you in my life! You gave me hope during the hard times when I was about to collapse, and helped me find within myself the will to work even harder.

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Abstract

The focus of this research is Saudi Arabian Higher Education (HE), specifically, how business schools are perceived by their key stakeholders. This study enriches the existing body of literature pertaining to Higher Education (HE) in the Saudi Arabian context. It also aims to provide HE policy makers with insights to influence strategic decisions pertaining to business schools in Saudi Arabia in the future, drawing on the concepts of ‘stakeholder differences’ and ‘reputation’

The context of the research reveals important findings regarding its contribution and potential impact. All aspects of society and education in Saudi Arabia are influenced by religion and this is set out in the context and later examined in a discussion of how stakeholder views are influenced by the wider societal background.

The concept of reputation is the lens through which this study positions and assesses stakeholders’ views of business schools. Reputation is examined here in order to fully comprehend its underlying constructs, dimensions and the different ways in which these can be understood. In particular, reputation can be classified here as being based on judgment where stakeholders’ own experience determines how reputation is constructed by them, or non-judgment based criteria where an external factor such as accreditation or ranking determines reputation.

Methodologically, the research adopts an interpretivist approach, employing semi-structured interviews with individuals from different stakeholder groups including, academics, students,

employers, and students' family members. Template Analysis, a specific form of thematic analysis for analysing and interpreting the collected interview data was adopted. The research contributes to methodological practice in this area by using parallel coding, in which English and Arabic transcripts were considered side by side to enhance the reliability of data. The methodology used also exemplifies the phases of Template Analysis and documents the progress from one phase to another.

The research makes a significant contribution to our understanding of business education in Saudi Arabia, by demonstrating that business schools and business education in Saudi Arabia have significant distinguishing characteristics that differentiate them from their counterparts in the US and the UK. This is important as it reveals that existing research, mainly conducted in and written from a Western perspective is not entirely applicable to the Saudi context.

The study is also the first of its kind to assess a wide spectrum of HE stakeholders in Saudi Arabia to understand their individual perspectives directly. By doing so it identifies potential conflicts of interest, whereby some aspects were viewed positively by some stakeholders and negatively by others. This adds detail and nuance to our understanding of how the reputation of business schools and business education is constructed in Saudi Arabia. This not only provides an interesting research finding but will also be of potential interest to policy makers in this field.

The research concludes that for universities and business schools, an awareness of their own reputation and how it is managed could contribute significantly to their operation and further development, and a key outcome from this research is the call to introduce reputation

management into the strategic development and policy guidelines for business schools in Saudi Arabia.

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List of Acronyms

- MOHE: Ministry of Higher Education
- MOE: Ministry of Education
- NCAAA: National Commission for Academic Accreditation & Assessment
- KAAU: King Abdulaziz University
- KSU: King Saud University
- KFUPM: King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals
- UQU: Umm Al-Qura University
- AACSB: Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
- AFAQ: Future Plan of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia
- CAQDAS: Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter introduces the thesis and outlines each chapter. It also provides background to the research topic, and an account from the author explaining how his personal interest in the phenomena developed and informs the research rationale.

1.1 Research Background and Research Rationale

The aims of this research arose directly from the author's personal experience as an undergraduate student at King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals (henceforth KFPUM); therefore, this section provides a personal account, to clarify the research rationale. The university has enjoyed an excellent reputation, since its establishment in 1965. Despite knowing that getting a place at the university would not be easy, it was the only one the author applied to.

The preparatory year passed quickly, and the moment to choose the department in which the author would study for the next four years arrived; the choice was between Engineering and Management. As his grades during the first year meant either path was open to him, he chose to study Systems Engineering because it appealed, and also involves some aspects of management. However, during the first semester, he began to re-consider his choice. Despite a marked preference for studying Engineering among his peers, and the assumption based bias that the Engineering department is 'superior', he ultimately changed to the Management programme. This decision was difficult, as choosing to study in a perceived lesser department

when accepted to study in the top department was considered unusual. The assumption of those around him had always been that by completing a degree at KFUPM he would be graduating as an engineer. Hence, the transfer process was perceived as a deliberate downgrading of the future qualification.

This led the author to consider why Management is considered a less propitious area of study. To answer this question, this research seeks to assess the position of business schools in general through a review of academic literature, such as that by Ghoshal (2005), Mintzberg (2004), and Pfeffer and Fong (2002), and the reasons for their perceived lower standing relative to other academic departments in Saudi Arabia. While examining the full scope of the question it became apparent that multiple factors and interested parties are involved in this perception. There was a high risk that, without a clear focus, the study could become unwieldy and impractical as a PhD project, due to the time frame allowed and the resources available. There was also a danger that it could also become too vague and descriptive, lacking adherence to rigid research standards.

The first opportunity to narrow down the focus of the study arose when an initial review of the topic led the author towards an investigation of stakeholder theory promoted by Freeman (1984) as a means to advance understanding. The introduction of stakeholder theory to the research made it possible to begin narrowing down both the scope of the research and key points of interest. Taking a researcher's view of the topic area, benefiting from former researchers like Jawahar and McLaughlin (2001), allowed precise questions to emerge. For

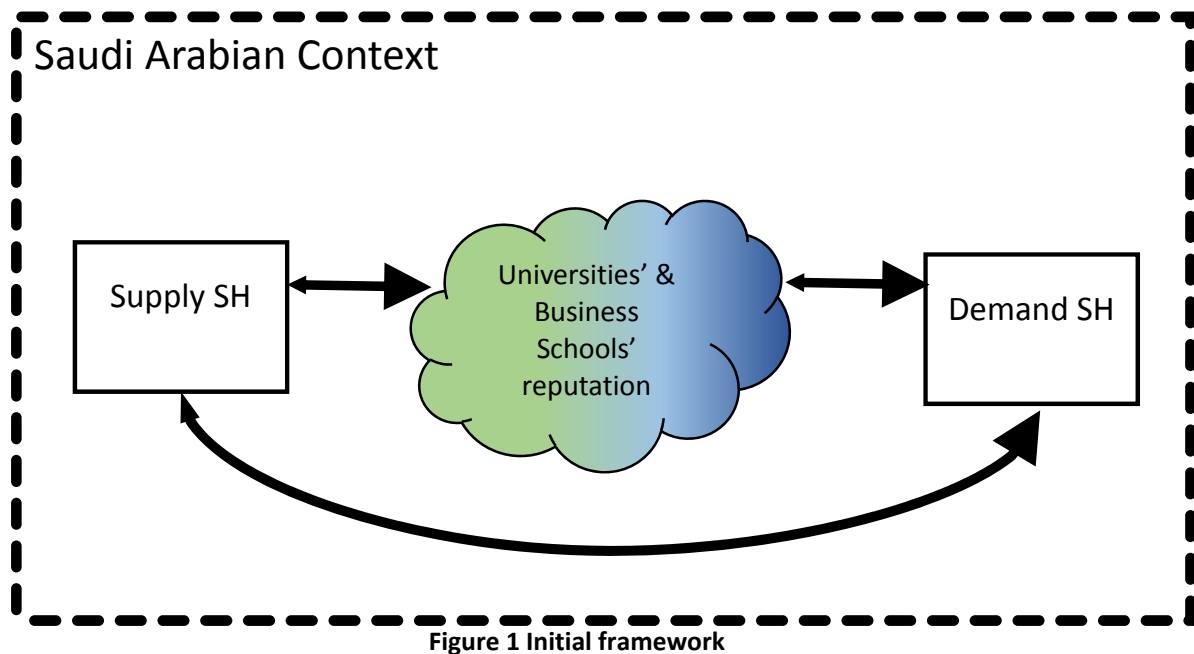
example, why are stakeholders important? What is known about them already in this context?
What would be a valid perspective from which to view the field?

The concept of reputation as an issue of importance arose while engaged in the process of deciding upon a suitable framework by examining studies that consider business school reputation like Rindova et al. (2005), and theorisation of reputation like Lange et al. (2011). This led to the emergence of defined research goals related to the concept of reputation, and when combined with stakeholder theory a theoretical framework emerged that could be employed to explain and interpret the collected data and lead to the generation of new insights.

1.2 Research Aim

The approach employed in this research, as demonstrated by the brief background to the study given above, is mainly an exploratory one. Several aims established the conduct and scope of the research. Firstly, the research seeks to enrich the existing body of literature relating to Higher Education (HE) in the Saudi Arabian context. This enrichment is provided not only by the final thesis, but also through questions raised and the potential for further research offered. HE in Saudi Arabia offers a rich vein for research, with potential to greatly impact both policy and practice. The growth of, and ongoing debates around HE in other national contexts are prompting Saudi researchers to also professionally investigate and contribute to the creation of established research in the field in this context (e.g. Willmott, 1994, and Pfeffer and Fong, 2002). This research also aims to provide policy makers with insights that will highlight any issues arising from the organisational strategy literature.

Concepts such as ‘stakeholder differences’ and ‘reputation’ (in terms of both harm and benefit) are anticipated to be of considerable interest to both policy makers and strategic planners (Ashkanasy, 2006). The figure below presents the initial framework, it illustrates how the reputation of business schools in Saudi Arabia is profoundly influenced by the national, cultural and religious context and by two main sets of stakeholders. As this thesis goes onto explain, the interdependence of the context and the stakeholder groups means that any study of business schools in Saudi Arabia requires a different contextual lens to those in the existing literature that have focused mainly on US and UK environments,



1.3 Contribution to Knowledge

The thesis examines the previously unexplored phenomenon of the reputation of business schools in Saudi Arabia and contributes to knowledge in three areas: context, methodology

and theory. It contributes to the broad literature on business schools and specifically, their development in Saudi Arabia.

Contextually, the research provides a valuable addition to the small volume of existing research into HE in Saudi Arabia. This is achieved by furthering understanding of the context of HE in Saudi Arabia to those outside country, and by providing a resource to assist in decision making by policy makers and university managers inside the country.

Methodologically, the research explores an area that has not been well researched to date by combining use of ‘a priori’ templates with mind mapping. It also contributes to the literature regarding the methodology used by discussing drawing on two different languages for data collection and writing up findings, and specifically on the use of parallel coding, as detailed on page 115.

Theoretically, the research expands the concerns of existing literature regarding the reputation of business schools in a previously unexplored context and also provides an empirical study of reputation, employing an interpretivist approach.

1.4 Practical Contribution

Practically the research aims to provide input in three ways:

- It suggests a road map for further research by identifying concepts that offer potential for further examination.

- It increases awareness of the importance of reputation management among HE institutions. Reputation management will become increasingly important among HE institutions in Saudi Arabia as resources become more limited and competition for students and funding intensifies.
- The research provides those responsible for planning with a number of insights that support strategic reputation planning. The answers to the research questions will be presented in a manner that ensures they benefit both strategic planners and policy makers.

1.5 Limitations

This research is subject to some known limitations and restrictions with the potential to affect the research outcomes.

The first limitation concerns the scarcity of studies and research projects in this area. This is most apparent in regard to studies about HE in Saudi Arabia. The majority of available publications are documentary. Examples include: Al Eisa and Smith (2013), Jamjoom and Kelly (2013), AlHamid et al. (2007), and MOHE (2012b) with only a few critical publications, such as AIEsá (2011). The shortage of critical studies about HE highlights the need for this research to provide extended background and context in relation to the findings obtained. To the best of researcher's knowledge, no studies to date have considered the status of business schools as differentiated bodies within universities or other HE institutions in Saudi Arabia. This lack of distinction does, however, complicate the data analysis and related

discussion presented in this thesis by making it difficult to separate perceptions about business schools and universities in general.

The second limitation concerns the use of language. The majority of the interviews were conducted in Arabic, the native language of both the researcher and the interviewees.

Although various measures were put in place to ensure the greatest possible accuracy when translating these, as detailed in the methodology chapter, there is still a risk that some interesting or relevant data was lost in translation.

However, both of these limitations were used to benefit the research methodologically. The first limitation encouraged the use of phased Template analysis, while the second encouraged the use of parallel language coding, as detailed in the Methodology chapter.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis follows a traditional PhD thesis structure. This first chapter introduces the thesis and sets out the main motives for conducting the research, its anticipated contribution, and its limitations. The Literature Review follows, divided into two chapters. Chapter two, the first part of the literature review, mainly focuses on Saudi Arabia and the education system itself, as this contextual detail is critical background to the remainder of the research. Chapter three, the second part of the literature review, considers the academic literature regarding business schools and presents some historical background regarding the development of debates around business schools and business education. It then examines the theoretical frameworks that informed research, stakeholder and reputation theories, in greater detail.

After this, the Methodology chapter follows, detailing the philosophical underpinnings of the research and the processes involved. The Methodology chapter also discusses the use of technology, language related challenges, privacy concerns, and the reliability of the research. The findings of the research are offered in the following chapter. The presentation of the findings reflects the template analysis approach adopted, and presents information from each stakeholder group thematically, based on aspects that emerged when constructing the templates. The Discussion chapter follows, and develops key ideas presented in the Findings chapter, discussing the findings in depth and answering the research questions. Finally, the Conclusion summarises the thesis and proposes possible future directions and recommendations to advance both current practice and research.

1.7 Research Questions

A typical approach to formulating a research question is by applying a process of problematization. This approach is promoted by Alvesson and Sandberg (2011), who offer it as an alternative to generating research questions based on gaps in the existing literature. Although this thesis addresses a significant gap in the literature, as there is relatively little research into this area in the context of Saudi Arabia, it uses the concepts of reputation and stakeholders to problematize the issues. The research questions will be restated and explained in further detail at the end of the literature review chapters. A conceptual framework will also illustrate how the questions have been derived from a review of the existing literature and how they address the phenomena under scrutiny in this study. The research questions posed are:

RQ1. What are the distinctive characteristics of Saudi Arabian business schools and the Saudi Arabian HE sector?

RQ2. How do a range of key stakeholders view business education and business schools in Saudi Arabia?

- What do stakeholders expect from business schools in Saudi Arabia?
- How do stakeholders use reputation to evaluate business schools and universities in Saudi Arabia?
- What reputational factors have a potential impact on business schools' strategies?

Chapter Two: Literature Review: Part One: Saudi Arabia and Education

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides background information relating to the research context, and provides readers with a review of Saudi Arabia and its educational environment. The chapter begins by offering relevant information about Saudi Arabia before moving on to cover relevant aspects related to education presented in previous literature.

In the section concerning Saudi Arabia, the background information encompasses areas associated with society and education and explains concepts related to religion, explaining how it is embedded in both societal and educational activities. The role of the holy book the ‘Quran’, and the status of mosques as key sources of knowledge and education in Muslim society, are described. The discussion then moves on to review the HE system, specifically the birth of modern Saudi universities as they exist today, their key characteristics, and of relevance to this topic.

2.2 Saudi Arabia in focus

Understanding the social structure and historical background of education in Saudi Arabia is crucial for this research, as it provides the context of all the arguments and discussions introduced. Explanations for key phenomena cannot be delivered without such an understanding. This section will cover the history of education in Saudi Arabia in light of its

social and cultural values. It will also highlight the role played by Islam, describing how far it influences educational development and other related social attributes.

In the early twentieth century, a successful unification movement emerged at the centre of the Arabian Peninsula under the leadership of King Abdul-Aziz bin Saud. According to AlHamid et al. (2007) the interior of the Peninsula had been neglected by the Ottoman Empire and so conflicts continued among the ruling tribes in the east as well as centrally, with implications for the education of the region's population. The western area of the Peninsula offered more educational opportunities, as the two holy cities of Makkah and Madinah are located there, with the result that the Ottoman rulers took an interest in the region (AlHamid et al., 2007).

Following the unification of the western province under the rule of the new King Abdul-Aziz, a meeting was called in Makkah on the subject of educating the Saudi population. Soon after this, in 1926, the foundation of the Directorate of General knowledge was announced. This was prior to the proclamation of the new state: the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932 (AlAnsari, 1993). According to Alharthi (2014b) this indicates the importance of education under Saudi rule, despite the fact that the country is facing challenges in both national and international spheres.

Today, several factors impact Saudi culture immensely. Firstly, the status of Islam, which plays a major role in determining the cultural characteristics, laws and practices within the country. And secondly, the discovery of oil in 1938, which required the young state to initiate changes in various aspects of life, addressing the need for reliable transportation and modes of communication, resulting in progress in health, industry, and education (Metz, 1993).

On the specific cultural factors informing management, a study by Bjerke and AlMeer (1993) employed Hofstede's (1984) measures of national cultural dimensions to the characteristics of Saudi Arabian managers, and found Saudi culture developed unique characteristics regarding the collectivism/individualism dimension. Specifically, individuals in Saudi Arabia tend to lend greater value to the collective sphere, and so decisions are typically influenced by collective action (Bjerke and AlMeer, 1993). This has important implications for the behaviour and approach of managers working in education in Saudi Arabia, as will become apparent later in this thesis.

2.3 The Holy Book, Quran

The Holy Quran is the main source of Muslim law, and in addition it plays a major role in Muslims' everyday lives. Muslims must learn key parts of the Quran for use when praying, although it is also permissible to imbibe the meaning from translations (in the form of speech or written text) (BinBaz, 2016). In the context of Saudi Arabia, Islam provides "vital social capital", facilitating connections between people and underpinning collective values (Alnuaim, 2013, p.20).

Importantly, the Quran highlights the importance of education and knowledge as an Islamic principle. Muslims believe that the very first revelation from the Almighty to the Prophet began with the word "Iqraa", which literally means 'read' (when used in the imperative form). Thus, many Islamic scholars argue that the very first directive from the Almighty to the Prophet and his followers was to read; this can be further interpreted as an instruction to

gain knowledge. Therefore, the link between knowledge, education, and religion is strongly enforced within Islam. Religion is unequivocally viewed as advocating both the acquisition of knowledge and education. However, there is debate in relation to the prioritisation of some kinds of knowledge or scientific discourses over others.

2.4 Mosques, the first university

Two of the three sites of holy worship in Islam fall within the geographical borders of Saudi Arabia. Historically, mosques were not only places for worship, but also education centres and community venues. Thus, the country was a prominent centre supporting religious education. As already noted above, learning, which is interpreted as essential for Muslims, is also considered as a form of worship that people can practice in order to enhance their piety (achieved through good deeds) in the eyes of the Almighty.

Historically, the majority of the first educational institutes in the Islamic world were within mosques or connected to them. Al Qarawiyyin University in Morocco is “The oldest existing, and continually operating educational institution in the world” (GuinnessWorldRecord, 2015). The university is named after and connected to a mosque (FSTC, 2009).

Earlier, in Saudi Arabia’s mosques, people first learned parts of the holy book. This required them to also learn to read and write, and absorb the fundamentals of the Arabic language and simple arithmetic. Much more recently, education has become institutionalised within modern schools (AlHamid et al., 2007).

2.5 Education System in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia was founded in the early 20th century, in its current political and geographical form. Prior to that time, the majority of its land was under the control of the Ottoman Empire, with the exception of some periods of history where local people took control over some parts of it. The current state of Saudi Arabia, which combines most parts of the Arabian Peninsula under a single government, is the most stable, united, and civilized nation to emerge in the region in the last few hundred years.

Although it is not within the remit of this research to explain the educational system throughout the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, some general background is essential. As mentioned previously, the role of religion is hugely influential in the country, and the Quran is central to people's lives, as the knowledge and education associated with religion holds primacy. This section offers some information regarding the general education and HE system in Saudi Arabia.

The education system in Saudi Arabia offers 12 years of pre-college study, six years at primary school level for students aged between 6 and 12, followed by three years at intermediate school and then finally, three years of secondary school, where all students study the same subjects in their first year, and are then given the opportunity to specialise in the last two years. Students choose from one of either of the two main streams: Natural Sciences or Humanities. This system is followed by most Saudis (MOE, 2015b). Students' choice in the last two years of secondary school determines their eligibility to enrol in

particular undergraduate programmes, and students from the Natural Sciences pathway can access more options. They are only excluded from very specific religious and humanities programmes. On the other hand, students from the Humanities stream are restricted from areas of study such as Medicine and Engineering, ruling out entire universities, such as the King Fahd University of Petroleum (KFUPM) and Minerals (KFUPM, 2016b). This university's business school was the first AACSB accredited business school in Saudi Arabia, and was granted accreditation in 2002 (KFUPM, 2016a). Two other business schools in Saudi Arabia received their AACSB accreditation much more recently, in 2015 (AACSB, 2016).

2.5.1 Cost of Education

Education in Saudi Arabia is free at all levels to any citizen choosing to become a student. There is an assumption among the public that the government should pay for HE (AlEsá, 2009).

In terms of course of study; while the options up to high school are limited, the choices in the HE sector are more diverse. Possible courses range from the vocational diploma courses offered by technical colleges to specialised doctoral degrees in several disciplines. Enrolling to study at government universities is free to all students, and enrolment criteria are controlled by government policies that afford preference to Saudi citizens. Meanwhile, area of study is conditional on the scores students achieve in high school and in national measurement tests (Qiyas). Gaining a place at university and studying one's desired subject are objectives that generate great competition among students. This was especially evident during the admissions squeeze in the late 1990s and early 2000s (AlEsá, 2011). In addition to

free enrolment, students at public universities are also supported by monthly allowances that assist them with their living expenses (Jamjoom, 2012).

The government's initial motive for offering free education and an allowance to students was to encourage citizens to enrol in HE, so the country would be able to rely on its own citizens in the future to run government departments and national businesses. However, arguably, free education has a negative effect on students, as they do not sufficiently appreciate the value of their lectures, labs, staff office hours, and university services (AlEsá, 2011). This argument is supported by statistics, which demonstrate that the number of students graduating in the time frames prescribed for their courses is below 50% (MOHE, 2012a, AlEsá, 2011).

The situation in Saudi Arabia is therefore, markedly different from that elsewhere in the world. Many students around the world routinely face financial challenges and can only receive a good education if they can succeed in securing local admissions or scholarships outside their native countries. In China, for example, financial constraints represent a barrier to accessing educational opportunities (Dong and Wan, 2012).

2.5.2 HE in Saudi Arabia

The history of HE in Saudi Arabia dates to the foundation of the Kingdom in the early nineteenth century. One of the first forms to develop, and which can be considered recognisable as modern HE was the “School of Preparation for Educational Missions” in 1934. This school prepared students to participate in government sponsored educational missions to other countries (AlEsá, 2011). Its establishment was triggered by the need for

qualified citizens to run organisations within what was becoming a modern country. Some education missions to Egypt began in 1928/29; thus, the desire for HE started before the unification of the country in its current form in 1932 (AlHamid et al., 2007). There are no clear records of student numbers, or of the subjects chosen by students as majors dating from this time. Nevertheless, the available evidence clearly indicates that education has always been a top priority to the Saudi government.

From 1950 onwards advancements occurred swiftly, as different colleges started to emerge. The first of these to be recognised as a university was King Saud University, located in Riyadh, the capital, in 1956 (AlHamid et al., 2007). HE then expanded with the establishment of seven universities by 1980. After almost two decades had passed, a further university was added in 1999 and a ninth in 2002 (AlEsá, 2011). At this time, the universities were experiencing challenges, especially from the increasing demand for admissions. Students tended to seek admission to the available universities, irrespective of the majors they offered. Some students joined parallel programmes, which were evening sessions including a curriculum similar to that taught in the programmes offered in morning sessions (AlEsá, 2011). During the period between 1990 and 2005, the pressures created by too many students seeking admission, and the emergence of alternative or parallel programmes to those at mainstream universities created a pattern that could not continue; this triggered the founding of community colleges and institutes for practical training as a private HE sector emerged (AlEsá, 2011).

This pressures placed on HE institutions arose from the political and financial situation in Saudi Arabia, specifically the financial support offered, and the centralisation of control by the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE). After the Gulf War in 1990, the country underwent its toughest financial period since oil was found, in order to pay off its war debt. Then following 2001, several places within the country became targets for terrorist attacks. Once Saudi Arabia had recovered financially, due to an increase in oil prices, the government invested heavily in education, establishing sixteen new universities and launching the King's programme for education missions. More than 70,000 Saudi students benefited from education missions up to 2010 (AlEsá, 2011). However, the sudden establishment of new universities raised many concerns; in particular regarding their efficiency, the availability of qualified staff, and the possibility that their graduates might be less well qualified than those from the longer established institutions (AlEsá, 2011).

Publications and reports about the development of education in Saudi Arabia portray it from two different perspectives; either descriptive or critical. Authors like Al Eisa and Smith (2013), Jamjoom and Kelly (2013), AlHamid et al. (2007), and MOHE (2012b), writing from a descriptive point of view welcome the development and expansion in HE. They applaud the growth in the number of citizens studying at education institutes and consequently the number of graduates, and the rising literacy rates across the country, demonstrating undeniable and significant growth. In addition, descriptive accounts reveal spending on education across the country is prominent. Moreover, to address concerns, in conjunction with the rising number of places in HE, staff and institutions are undergoing simultaneous quality development and training as part of the development process. These

activities include, but are not limited to, national projects such as AAFAQ. At present, the focus of Saudi universities is on teaching the next generation, rather than on promoting research; arguably, the impact from Saudi researchers remains minimal (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013).

Critical reviews of the development of education in Saudi Arabia, such as that by AIEsá (2011), reveal that despite the enormous progress achieved, efforts are still falling far behind practical requirements. In part this is because the philosophy of education has not changed for some time. Indeed, the only official document establishing a strategy and goals for education in the country is over 40 years old and does not inform recent developments, despite its relevance at the time it was produced (AIEsá, 2011). In particular, the document offers no explicit details to negotiate the recent developments in education at all levels. There are no examples of preferred pedagogy and practice on the official websites of the Ministry of Education or the MoHE, nor on the website for the national development plan AAFAQ (MOHE, 2012c, MOE, 2015a, MOE, 2015b).

In addition, very little has been written about the philosophy of education in Saudi Arabia. One of the key publications in this regard is a book by Ahmed Al-Isa (2011) in Arabic, entitled *HE in Saudi Arabia: A journey looking for Identity*. In it, the author acknowledges the massive developments in education in the country and the enormous achievements and successes that have fuelled growth in terms of both the number of institutes and beneficiaries of the Saudi HE system.

2.5.3 Qiyas – The Admission Test

The Qiyas is a national test prepared and administered by The National Center for Assessment in HE. Its scores are used by all the public universities in Saudi Arabia to assess students' eligibility for admission. Determining a threshold for admission is performed locally by each university. It is also up to universities to decide what weighting should be given to high school grades and to the Qiyas test, in order to generate a 'weighted measure' for admission to university or to a specific discipline (Qiyas, 2016).

2.5.4 Part-time Education

An alternative made available to those otherwise unable to access HE, is known locally as 'Intisab' or parallel programmes. These are part time programmes offered by universities, the majority of which have distance learning components. These programmes are taught by the same university teachers as those teaching regular courses, and students usually attend in person at the beginning of the term to take materials, and receive introductory briefs about the course and learn about assessment criteria. In most cases students do all their study and learning independently, but must take a final exam or submit coursework in order to pass the module.

These programmes are only offered at public universities. Hence, distance learning, other than that offered by public universities, is not officially accredited by local authorities, and qualifications earned this way cannot be used to apply for public sector jobs. If acquired from a local public university, Intisab courses are accredited and are viewed as relevant

qualifications when applying for jobs in the public sector. The quality and academic outcomes from such programmes have not been adequately measured thus far, and the few studies about distance learning programmes in the Saudi Arabian context, address aspects such as the readiness of staff and students to adopt e-learning technologies (Zeny et al., 2015) and suggest a flexible framework to introduce open resources in Arab universities (Etmizy, 2015).

Intisab courses are subject to some criticism in local media outlets, where it is suggested they are less useful and deliver questionable outcomes. Thus, additional future studies in the Saudi Arabian context are required in the vein of Redpath (2012) study, which questioned the assumption that face-to-face teaching is always superior to online or blended teaching methods.

2.5.5 Co-op programs

Some of the more widely explored features of the Saudi Arabian HE are co-op programmes and preparatory year programmes. These are not exclusive to the Saudi Arabian context, and where they exist are typically regarded as constructive. Co-op programmes cover the period when students are encouraged to seek on the job training before becoming eligible to graduate. A preparatory year is not mandatory at all universities, but some are implementing co-op programmes routinely to focus on building English and Mathematics skills.

With regard to governance in Saudi Arabian HE, there seems to be ‘under-the-hood’ reform occurring; for example, King Abdullah University for Science and Technology KAUST,

established in 2008, is situated as an independent body not under the control of the MoHE. The main motive currently is to improve flexibility to move towards becoming a world-class institute. The impact of this on the Saudi Arabian HE sector has not yet been measured (Al Eisa and Smith, 2013). A study by Gault et al. (2000) revealed a positive relationship between students attaining internships and entering employment more quickly with higher salaries; this also extended to include improved relationships between businesses and university staff. Indeed, nearly ten years after its implementation it yet to be established whether the model should be expanded or not.

2.5.6 Private Education

The numbers of private education institutions is growing at all levels. Private schools for early years education and the levels leading up to university or college, were in operation even before the formation of the country in its current form (AlHamid et al., 2007). However, private HE is a relatively new development that only began early in the 21st century in Saudi Arabia. Until then, all HE institutes were public and government-owned.

In private education settings for school aged students, private schools were required to teach citizens in accordance with the national curriculum. Students from other countries were permitted to choose whether they followed the national curriculum or an international one. This changed in the early 2000s when Saudi citizens were first permitted to study at schools using the international curriculum. The international curriculum remains unpopular and is not taught in government schools (which comprise the majority of Saudi schools); its use is limited to private consulate schools.

The first private institute to recruit students in an HE setting opened in 1999 (Jamjoom, 2012). Private HE was then viewed as an alternative to public education, one offering potential for better quality outcomes (Jamjoom, 2012). The initial motive behind the policy of private HE was to expand the foundation of HE to increase the involvement of the private sector to complement public HE (MOE, 2015e).

2.5.7 Female Education

In Saudi Arabia, all aspects of life are influenced by the traditions that inform cultural norms. The change in women's circumstances as regards to social interaction are considered to have been one of the most crucial social change to occur in the Kingdom in the last three decades. Education is believed to be the cornerstone in the development of opportunities for women (Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013). It is unclear whether official regulations will maintain the policy of segregation or if they will be eased to allow the members of society to determine their own preferences. However, it is claimed that segregation is imposed by both cultural and religious values. Segregation and the involvement of women in mixed work places is the topic of ongoing and intense debate within society. It is unclear how or when the debate will end, and if there will be any major shift in the perspectives of those engaged in it. However, in the context of this research, it is only important to consider how the situation affects the results of this research. In particular, it is imperative to consider how the exclusion of women's voices from this research will affect its focus and findings. In keeping with the policy in Saudi Arabia supporting the separation of males and females, separate campuses for males and females were established at its universities. These campuses provide women with

opportunities at all levels of education, while ensuring segregation is maintained; for example, women can study in the same university but at different colleges, or at universities for women only (Mazi and Altbach, 2013, Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013). The first official body responsible for girls' education, the General Presidency for Girls' Education, was formed in 1960; it was later integrated into the Ministry of Education. All efforts prior to this date comprised local initiatives or home-based learning (Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013).

In Saudi culture, and in Islam, men are held responsible for the lives and security of the girls and women to whom they are related. Thus, women do not need to work to earn a living, as they should always be supported by the men responsible for them. This view encapsulates the debate on whether women should work, asking if they do, are they jeopardising their primary responsibility for taking care of the home and raising children (Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013, p. 112).

One of the relevant aspects to address here in reference to HE is the number of girls studying in the different disciplines. The choices for girls are limited in comparison to those extended to boys. To date, girls have not been granted access to engineering schools, and their access to business schools is also limited. This is apparent from official figures published by the Ministry of Education, showing the number of enrolments in each discipline. For example, the number of girls studying business and management is significantly lower the number of boys, despite a recent increase. The percentage of girls enrolled in business and management related studies was below 10% until 2010 at undergraduate level, while the percentage of boys was more than double that during the same period, at 20% (MOE, 2016b). The official

records do not clarify the exact number of students of each gender in business and management disciplines, as the figures are not separated, although the detailed records for some years include subjects like Healthcare management and Housekeeping management within the above-mentioned percentage. Thus, the records can only be used as an indication of the lesser popularity of business and management studies among female students.

The setting of female education is criticised for having disadvantages that extend beyond the education process itself; as Jamjoom and Kelly (2013, p. 112) state: “The disadvantage of gender-segregated education is that women emerging from such a setting are not equipped to conduct themselves in employment settings populated by both men and women.” The workforce distribution is affected by both the educational system and cultural values. The involvement of women in the workforce can be viewed from two perspectives. First, traditional workplaces for women include girls’ schools, hospitals, and some female government departments. Second, the inclusion of women in private businesses is partially a result of localisation campaigns by the Ministry of Labour, permitting female workers access to roles they could not previously adopt, such as on shop floors and in administrative capacities. It is too early to evaluate their experience through detailed studies of management education and practice, as too little data is currently available (AlAsfour and Khan, 2014).

This issue is problematic and raises debates and discussions that are not within the remit of this research; thus, it is considered only relevant here to acknowledge the potential impact of this socio-cultural circumstance on the research.

2.5.8 Government Scholarship Programme (Education Mission)

Recent reports and statistics illustrate that Saudi Arabia has a large number of students studying abroad proportional to its overall population. The structure of government scholarship programmes encourage students to continue with their studies until they acquire the highest degree possible. The government's education mission is currently sponsoring more than 150,000 students worldwide (MOE, 2015d). To put this number in context , in 2014 the largest population of international students in the US was Chinese students, of whom there were around 274,000, while the fourth largest contingent was Saudi Arabian at 54,000 (IIE.org, 2015). If these figures are to be compared with the total populations of these countries, the Saudi overseas student percentage as a proportion of the population is a hundred times greater than that of China.

This is the most generous sponsorship programme in the history of education in Saudi Arabia, and it was driven not only by availability of funds, but by a strong political will (AlEsá, 2011).

The aims of the programme also included the remit of interacting in an open-minded manner with other cultures and societies, and this has had remarkable socio-cultural effects felt by an entire generation. Indeed, AlEsá (2011) claimed that the programmes will have a notable effect on society, culture, levels of qualification, and the competitive edge of the entire nation.

Considering the management education perspective, it is the case that the education mission programme includes many students studying business and management across the strata of HE. Nevertheless, the decision to study business and management is less encouraged than the decision to study medicine, engineering, physics, maths, chemistry and other science subjects (MOE, 2015d).

Despite its popularity, the scholarship programme brought about challenges in many areas. One of these related to the eligibility of degrees obtained outside Saudi Arabia as valid for securing employment in the country. The Ministry of Civil Services is the government body responsible for all government recruitment aside from military recruitment. The recruitment rules state that qualifications obtained from non-Saudi institutes need to be 'equivalent' to those locally obtained (MOE, 2016e).

2.5.9 Choice of engagement

To the best of this researcher's knowledge, there are no studies or publications showing how different stakeholders choose to engage or otherwise in the activities of certain business schools in Saudi Arabia. This section will elaborate on different scenarios set out in the literature, which might or might not be applicable to the Saudi Arabian context. Further discussion will follow regarding stakeholders and the reputation of course, to conceptualise a better understanding of preferences and choice in light of this thesis' aims.

In a study by Cabrera and La Nasa (2000), conducted in the U.S, the process of choosing a university was reported to start as early as seventh grade. In Saudi Arabia there is no known

research that explains students' decisions clearly. In fact, the decision a student makes after their first year in secondary school does not necessarily reveal evidence of choice. As discussed above, studies in the final two years in secondary school are divided into two main categories, Humanities, and Natural Sciences. Business schools throughout Saudi Arabia impose different admissions requirements in terms of high school choices, but these differences are common to all universities. For example, one university stated that it excludes Humanities high school graduates from admission (KFUPM, 2016b), whereas other universities limit admissions in business schools to those who selected a Natural Sciences pathway (KAU, 2016), while others publish general guidance without specifying high school pathways (KSU, 2016a). The importance of this classification is to recognise that the first informed decision students make regarding their undergraduate degree takes place before they begin the final two years of high school.

Geographical location is also a factor when students first choose a university. In a study in Canada, Drewes and Michael (2006) concluded that closer to home universities are generally perceived as more attractive. Statistics published by the Ministry on admissions did not disclose information about further categorisations of admitted students to ascertain if they were from the same city, or had taken a similar high school pathway, although such information was useful.

Tuition fees were another factor used to prioritise university choice in other contexts (Dong and Wan, 2012), but this does not apply in Saudi Arabia, as the majority of universities are public and study there is free (MOE, 2015c).

2.6 The Islamic Economic Model

Religion clearly plays a major role in most aspects of Saudi society, and in people's lives. Willmott (1994) argues that in order to understand the problems within management education, it is vital to understand the capitalist society whose values were adopted via the practice and theory of management education. This raises a point highlighted in the Saudi Arabian context: that the understanding of social values and social characteristics should play a role in any critique of management as a practice and as a research subject. In religious literature, the capitalist model of society is not seen as a suitable model to apply to an Islamic society; neither is the communist model. It is argued that the ideal Islamic economic model inhabits a space between these two commonly referenced models; it encourages social collaboration, but does not deny individuals' private wealth and ownership rights. It is clear that current business models and curricula for Business and Management Education in the Saudi context do not adequately allow for the most essential differences between these social structure models and their potential effects on management and business practices.

Regardless of the discussion around the models presented thus far, education certainly occupies a role in encouraging individuals to comply with a financial system informed by religion. A study by Kasmo et al. (2015) in Malaysia revealed that students in religion based schools are more likely to use Islamic financial options than their peers from non-religious schools are. Despite this, the implication of Islamic finance regulations are not taught transparently in any business school in Saudi Arabia.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the current situation within business schools and universities in Saudi Arabia. It has also outlined the most notable characteristics of the study context. The following chapter will continue by reviewing the academic literature pertaining to theoretical aspects of business schools, stakeholders, and reputation.

Chapter Three: Literature Review: Part Two: Business and Management

Education

“It takes twenty years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it.” Warren Buffet 1995, cited in (Lange et al., 2011, p. 154)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the academic literature produced in relation to business schools in the HE setting in Saudi Arabia, highlighting studies that specifically relate to business and management education. The first section reviews the literature regarding business and business education, examining the debates around business schools in particular. The second section examines stakeholder theory and its various applications and previous uses. Finally, it considers how reputation has been defined, and the dimensions to which it relates.

3.2 Business Schools and Business Education

Business Schools are usually schools or colleges that teach or research into business and management related subjects. Business schools belong to no clear-cut subject discipline; the subjects taught in business schools typically include (but are not limited to): Marketing, Accounting, Management, Human Resources, Economics, and Finance, as manifest in the renowned MBA.

The evolution of business schools in their current form dates from attempts to professionalise business education in the U.S. in the early 1800s, which were followed by the institutionalisation of establishments to do so in the mid-1900s (Khurana, 2011). The very first business school in a form that we would recognise today was the Wharton school, established in 1881 (Starkey and Tiratsoo, 2007); however, this does not mean that management knowledge originated solely in the US. Indeed, there is some evidence that “management knowledge within higher education originally started in Europe, not in the US” (Thomas et al., 2013, p. 4). Both Wharton (est. 1881) and Harvard Business School (est. 1907) were principally run by academics who obtained their PhD’s in Germany (Spender, 2007). The following paragraphs outline key events and debates regarding business schools and business education as in the US and the UK mainly.

The period from the early 1900s to late 1950s is referred to as the era of trade schools (Spender, 2007) or sometimes as business school 1.0 (Moldoveanu and Martin, 2008). This period is characterised mainly by the need to legitimise management education as the industrial era took hold, and it was then the norm that teaching staff were also practitioner managers (Bennis and O'Toole, 2005). The first bachelor’s degrees at Wharton were highly influenced by Taylorism, which is the best known form of scientific management (Thomas and Cornuel, 2011). Key features of scientific management mean that it is frequently criticised for being inhuman and treating workmen as machines (Derksen, 2014). The emergence of Taylorism in workplaces, along with the rise in large corporations bring about changes to the social order through the appearance of a new class of workers, managers (Khurana and Penrice, 2011), opportunists and selfishness behaviours, which were observed

among both the working and managerial classes (Wagner-Tsukamoto, 2007). At this time there were no business schools in Saudi Arabia (KSU, 2016b) and the education environment records no business related teaching options (AlHamid et al., 2007).

The development and reform of business schools worldwide has passed key milestones to arrive at its current form. The second wave of development in business schools has been termed business school 2.0 (Moldoveanu and Martin, 2008), and resulted from post war demands in the US (Khurana, 2011) that witnessed significant growth in the number of business schools outputting MBA graduates (DeAngelo et al., 2005). This growth comes with challenges as external players became involved, namely the Ford Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation, to “save college and university business education from itself, and turn it into a purposeful educational and social force” (Khurana, 2011, p. 113). Consequently, a key event to affect American business schools was the publication of the Ford Foundation report. This report, released in 1959, discussed the impact of business schools and business education on US management practices. The outcomes of the report are believed to have had a far-reaching great and unrelenting impact on business education (Khurana, 2011, Bennis and O'Toole, 2005, and Pfeffer and Fong, 2002).

The Ford Foundation is believed to have spent more than \$35 million in the 1950s to improve the effectiveness of business schools following World War II (Thomas et al., 2013). Their main intention in doing so, was to produce managers who could truly be perceived of as ‘professional’ (Khurana and Penrice, 2011). To achieve the required level of professionalism, the report posited two key assumptions:

First, the reasoning went, business schools must increase the proportion of faculty with doctorates in existing academic disciplines, primarily the social sciences and various quantitative fields. Secondly, business school faculty and MBA students must be extensively trained in quantitative analysis and the behavioural sciences. (Khurana and Penrice, 2011, p. 6)

The pressure to quantify management procedures and focus on increasing shareholders' benefits led some theories to be devalued, such as Human Relations theory, which principally directs attention towards the human factor (Khurana and Penrice, 2011). In the period after the Ford foundation report, until the 1990s, positivism dominated the design of business education (Thomas et al., 2013).

The increase in PhD holders in business schools and the more scientific oriented academic results shifted the attention of business schools from that of disseminating knowledge (i.e. teaching) towards knowledge creation (i.e. research). However, the rigid publication criteria imposed made the research remote from practice and so unappealing to reader practitioners (Bennis and O'Toole, 2005).

The situations at US and UK business schools were not exactly the same, as "European schools are generally regarded as more eclectic and flexible" (Thomas et al., 2013, p. 10). The diversification in European business schools ranged from US like elite schools, such as: INSEAD in France, London Business School in the UK, and IESE in Spain, to a greater focus on the ties between business on one side and humanities and social sciences on the other, as at the University of Leicester (Thomas et al., 2013). Top rated business schools worldwide can be fully independent bodies, such as the London Business School, but are often part of a university, such as the University of Liverpool Management School.

The foundation of the first business school in Saudi Arabia in (1959) as a trade school (KSU, 2016b), and the subsequent expansion in the number of business schools across the country followed the same pattern of expansion as other schools and universities in the country. At the time of writing up this thesis, there are no independent business schools in Saudi Arabia; those that exist are part of larger universities, either in the domains of private or public HE; not all, but the majority of universities have their own business schools (MOE, 2015c).

The following section discusses some of the critiques regarding business schools in the recent decades as presented in academic literature about the US and UK contexts.

3.2.1 Critiques of business schools

Business schools have been subject to appraisal by researchers and their validity questioned in terms of legitimacy (Morsing and Sauquet Rovira, 2011), effectiveness (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002), and ethics (Ghoshal, 2005). Criticisms made include that they target the wrong people, use ineffective methods, or present untimely information (Mintzberg, 2004). Some of these key critiques have extended to describe the assumed impact of business schools on both graduates and management professionals. A seminal article by Pfeffer and Fong (2002), entitled “The End of Business Schools? Less Success than Meets the Eye”, evaluated empirical data to support the notion that business schools are less effective than had previously been thought. One of the criticisms levelled at business schools, was that as businesses themselves, they are frequently treated as the cash cows of universities and as contributors to national economy (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002, Pfeffer and Fong, 2004). This is not applicable to the Saudi Arabian case, as all business schools are located within

universities and consequently funded by government. To date, details of the allocation of government funds to Saudi universities by department have not been published by the Ministry of Finance or the Ministry of Education. Therefore, it is unknown whether business schools receive resources equal to those given to other schools at the same universities.

This concern is certainly echoed in a seminal and widely cited article authored by Ghoshal (2005), which accuses practices in business schools, as adopted the Ford Foundation's suggestions, as responsible for major scandals in the business environment. In his article, he argues that more harm than good is being done to businesses and society by business schools. Such harm is mainly a consequence of the theories that business schools are teaching, which focus on financial efficiency; thus, ignoring the human factor when discussing management practices (Ghoshal, 2005).

3.2.2 The performance of business schools

The performance and effectiveness of business schools has been widely debated in a variety of contexts. Scholars and researchers express different perspectives and employ various criteria when assessing and evaluating business schools' performance, such as accreditation and ranking perspectives. These measures are not only viewed as indicators of the quality of business education, but also reflect the reputation of the business schools themselves (Baden-Fuller et al., 2000). The following sections discuss ranking and accreditation as phenomena, before explaining how they apply within the context of business schools.

3.2.2.1 Ranking

Business school rankings list and organise business schools according to specific criteria. These differ from one ranking measure to another, some including recruiters' and students' views, and others giving weight to reputation and or salary progression for graduates (Peters and Thomas, 2007). Ranking is a debated area, that has been subject to criticism, most notably by Gioia and Corley (2002), who argued that it produces a Circe's sphere, wherein business schools are encouraged to concentrate more on how they look and how they can achieve better rankings, than on their core functions; i.e. teaching and research. They can be employed to evaluate different aspects of business schools' activities, although many focus mainly on research output, at the expense of teaching quality. Even when some measures of teaching are included (as in the *THE*), the criteria set to measure teaching, such as ratio of staff to students, or number of PhD graduates, does not accurately evaluate teaching outcomes. Nevertheless, it is to be commended when teaching is included as an integral part of the ranking process (Altbach, 2013).

In Saudi Arabia, the concept of ranking has gained credence and generated public interest as a result of media coverage. Thus far, however, there are no local or regional ranking measures available in Saudi Arabia. Thus, local universities in Saudi Arabia rely on rankings provided via different global ranking bodies including the *THE*, the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), and Webometrics. Some Saudi universities are featured in one or more of these rankings such as: KSU, KAAU, and KFUPM (Mazi and Altbach, 2013).

3.2.2.2 Accreditation

Accreditation is a process in which a university, a school or a specific programme meets the standard of an accrediting body in a specific field. Internationally, business schools are accredited worldwide through different bodies, one of the most recognised being the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), which also accredits some business schools in Saudi Arabia; including KFUPM and KAU (AACSB, 2016).

Additionally, in Saudi Arabia there is a local accreditation body known as the National Commission for Academic Accreditation & Assessment (NCAAA). Universities in Saudi Arabia should comply with local accreditation requirements, although they are assured by the NCAAA that accreditation is not a goal but a tool to assist them in developing a culture of effectiveness as learning organisations (Darandari and Cardew, 2013).

Romero (2008) assumes that AACSB accreditation has a positive impact on business schools in areas such as innovation, strategy, and flexibility. Accreditation has also been the subject of some criticism. Julian and Ofori-Dankwa (2006) acknowledged the importance of accreditation as a way of legitimising business education, but encouraged universities and business schools to consider their external environments more expansively (i.e. stakeholders), rather than focusing solely on requirements and criteria set by accreditation bodies. In the same line, accreditation is accused of reducing dynamism and innovation in business schools to avoid misalignment with accreditation requirements (Noorda and Howard, 2011).

3.3 The three missions of universities

Today, both globally, and in Saudi Arabia, universities are increasingly reviewing their activities in relation to three key missions: teaching, research, and social engagement (Predazzi, 2012). The third mission broadly refers to the university's engagement with wider society, but is sometimes more narrowly understood to refer to entrepreneurial support (Gulbrandsen and Slipersæter, 2007). The level and intensity with which each individual university engages with or values each of these missions differs (Laredo, 2007).

Universities in Saudi Arabia are no exception to this; the national plan for HE development (AAFAQ) includes a key segment relating to social engagement and action plans, intended to bolster universities' commitment to benefit society at different levels (MOE, 2015a).

Elsewhere, teaching is prioritised, as it is recognised as an essential component of a university's purpose. However, this raises issues regarding preferred teaching methods (Sadler, 2012) and teaching materials (Fahey, 2012). Relevant to the context of this study, in a seminal article, Pfeffer and Fong (2002) discussed how teaching affects business students and management as a profession, arguing that the elaborate path pursued by business schools in the US is unlikely to continue without change.

The significant mission to further research, which, as stated above has formerly been a lesser priority in the Saudi context, has been addressed in relation to business schools in other environments. Research has also been a focus in studies examining aspects such as perceived relevance (Paton et al., 2013) and quality (Gioia and Corley, 2002). For example, Mintzberg

and Gosling (2002) discussed the impact of business schools' research on future practice. Extending this element of research, Paton et al. (2013) claimed business school research is likely to be beneficial to business practice, as it offers a challenging view of practice.

Crucially, both teaching and research require universities to employ qualified and experienced staff. Noorda (2014), who has held various leading academic roles, stated: "...it is evident that the quality of teaching and researching is immediately linked to the quality of the women and the men doing it" (p. 67).

When teaching is undertaken as the main function of a university, teachers assume a critical role in the learning process. The notion of the practitioner-teacher is seen as important to students as it lends more relevance to their studies (Johnston, 2014, Brotheridge and Long, 2007). Another aspect considered to be important here is the role of co-op training or internships, in which students are expected to undergo a period in the workplace before graduation. This type of training is viewed as beneficial for later obtaining a job and improving the salary potential of graduates (Gault et al., 2000).

Social Engagement is acquiring increased attention in HE research, especially as it can provide new relationships between universities and their stakeholders. However, the implementation of third mission activities demands a form of organisational change subject to some resistance (Bercovitz and Feldman, 2008). On the subject of the potential societal impact of business schools, Amann et al. (2011) and Morsing and Sauquet Rovira (2011) discuss how they can affect different levels of society through business and management

practices that connect with stakeholders as the beneficiaries of social engagement. In Saudi Arabia this can be connected with resources from AFAQ, and/or universities websites.

3.4 The way forward for business schools

After coming under fire in academic and non-academic articles, business schools are surviving and navigating their way forward. Accreditation, higher ranking, and reputation are seen by Noorda and Howard (2011) as challenges to innovation and development in business schools. Similarly Thomas and Cornuel (2011) view business schools as needing to overcome challenges and improve their innovative agenda before seeking accreditation to increase their marketability.

Some studies have specifically examined how business schools carry their missions forward. Thorpe and Rawlinson (2014) conducted an extensive study backed with significant experience in business schools, and expressed several suggestions for future approaches. Their suggestions ranged from enhancing activities such as teaching and research towards greater engagement with stakeholders through engaging practitioners, and improving relationships with industry so that they are forged at the institutional level rather than for each individual project. A key suggestion made in their study was that each business school build on its own capabilities, to “Move to more distinctly defined roles for different institutions: many institutions should focus more on their strongest academic competencies and a preferred flavour of business engagement” (Thorpe and Rawlinson, 2014, p. 471).

Starkey and Tempest's (2009) notion of business school development and strategy to overcome recent criticisms aims to have greater engagement with the humanities and the arts, making business education and management practice more human based. Their view of business school strategy is as something that “involves cultivating a more open way of relating to people and to the tasks of management” (p. 585). In other words they call for greater engagement with the wider stakeholder group. Engagement with stakeholders should be embedded in business schools’ strategies and has been suggested as a driver of strategy. In 2010, Salem Khalifa (2010) suggested the way forward for business schools is to ensure the motive behind business schools’ strategy emphasises creating value for larger stakeholders, rather than implementing business like strategies. (Bennis and O'Toole, 2005)

From another perspective, Anderson et al. (2017) refer to taking business schools forward as a way of overcoming the many criticisms they have encountered at the hands of a single stakeholder group; i.e. academics. They called for a review of how academics in the business and management context could create a positive impact, suggesting that better engagement with practitioners (i.e. another stakeholder group) is needed. This engagement calls for new venues to communicate research outcomes and translate them into useful practices.

3.5 Stakeholder Theory

‘Stakeholder’ has become a significant term used when debating organisational and managerial activities (Freeman et al., 2010). ‘Stakeholder’ as an explicit term was first used in 1963 in an internal memorandum from the Stanford Research Institute (Parmar et al.,

2010). However, the first theorisation of the stakeholder role was attributed to Freeman (1984) in his book, 'Strategic Management: A stakeholder perspective'.

Freeman is widely characterised as the guru of stakeholder theory (Parmar et al., 2010), having provided the most frequently cited definition of a stakeholder (Susnienė and Purvinis, 2013). Freeman (1984) introduced the Stakeholder Approach to underpin dominant understanding that supposes the main beneficiaries of an organisation are those who own it; in other words, its shareholders. The difference between a shareholder and a stakeholder relates to the issue of ownership. Shareholders own the company or parts of it, while stakeholders is an extended group include owners and a wider spectrum of interested parties. The classic definition of a stakeholder includes anyone able to “affect the achievement of an organization's objectives or who is affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives” (Freeman, 1984, p.46).

An important aspect of stakeholder theorisation is the benefit of understanding and acknowledging the complexity of relationships. It is not only the relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders, but also those between the stakeholders themselves that are important. Understanding these relationships necessarily includes attentiveness to time factors, as these relationships might be expected to change over time. “To understand a business is to know how these relationships work and change over time” (Parmar et al., 2010, p. 406). The significance and influence of stakeholders are time dependant factors, and adopt different levels of importance throughout an organisation's life cycle. Jawahar and McLaughlin (2001) suggested that different phases in a firm's life cycle require different

attention be placed on stakeholders' and their requirements. Figure 2 below summarises how attention differs throughout a firm's growth stages.

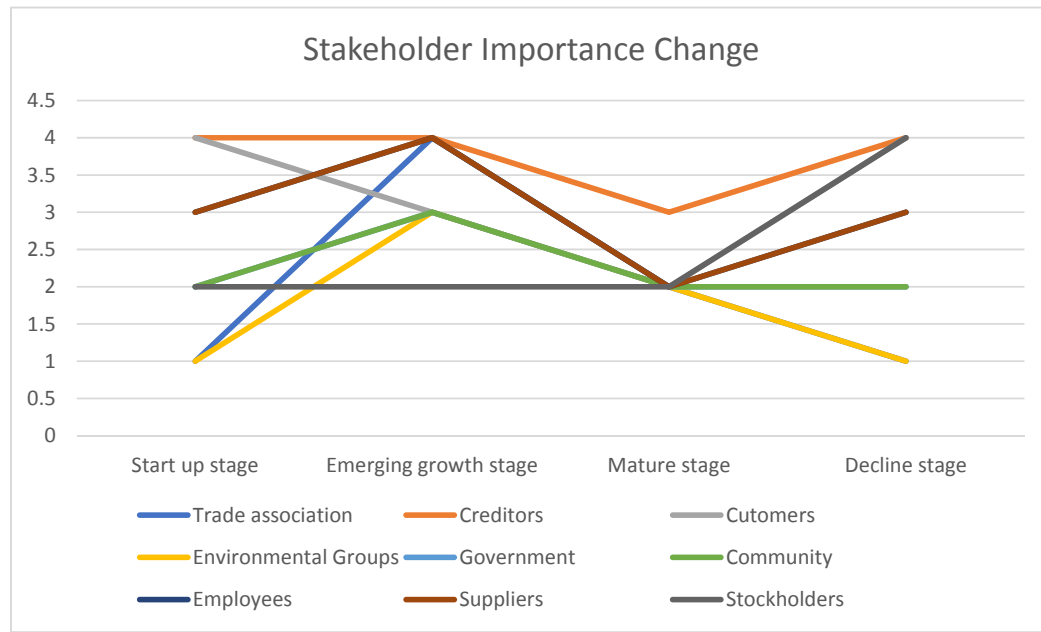


Figure 2 Stakeholder Importance Change

The practice of stakeholder classification was examined in an important study by Mitchell et al. (1997), which has been cited more than 9000 times in the literature at the time of writing this thesis. It offers a framework and model that can be employed to categorise different stakeholder groups, and Mitchell et al. (ibid) define three attributes according to which stakeholders can be identified: Power, Legitimacy, and Urgency. They

propose that classes of stakeholders can be identified by their possession or attributed possession of one, two, or all three of the following attributes: (1) the stakeholder's power to influence the firm, (2) the legitimacy of the stakeholder's relationship with the firm, and (3) the urgency of the stakeholder's claim on the firm (Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 854)

The figure below shows how these attributes overlap, offering proposed names for each group of stakeholders as presented in Mitchell et al. (1997):

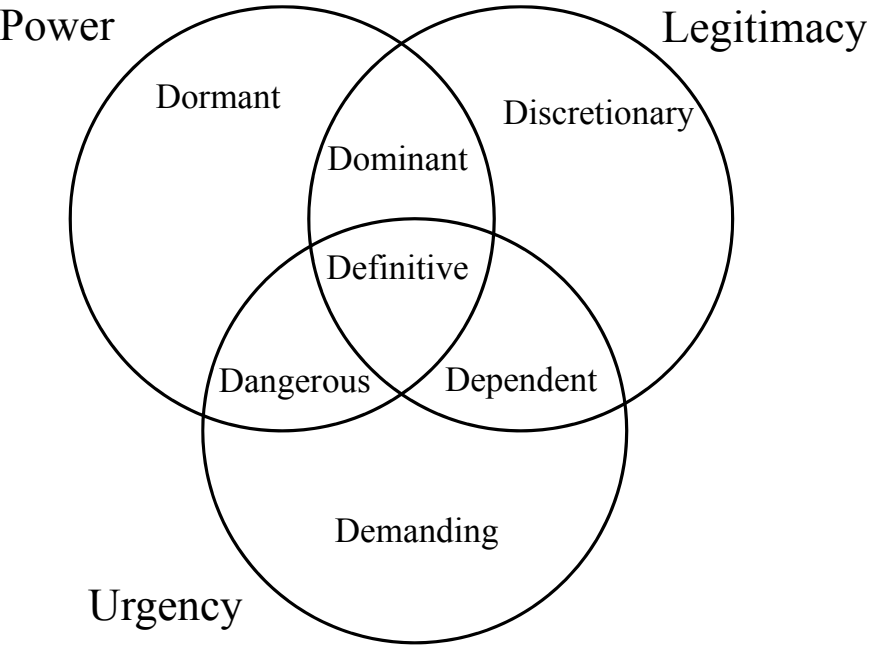


Figure 3 Stakeholder types

It should be acknowledged that Stakeholders can variously be seen as individuals or as high status groups (Vartiainen, 2003). The table below depicts the key characteristics of each type as provided by (Mitchell et al., 1997):

Stakeholder Type	Key Characteristics
Dormant	Has power, but no legitimacy, nor urgency. Hence, power unused. e.g. media
Discretionary	Has legitimacy, but no power, nor urgency. Usually seen as an interest to corporate social responsibility
Demanding	Have urgency, but no power, nor legitimacy. Annoying to management referred to as 'mosquitos'
Dominant	Has power and legitimacy, but no urgency. Assured effects, e.g. members at directors board
Dependent	Has legitimacy and urgency, but no power. No direct influence and usually depends on other stakeholders' power.
Dangerous	Has power and urgency, but no legitimacy. e.g. terrorists
Definitive	Has power, legitimacy, and urgency. Hence, most influential

Table 1 Key Characteristics of stakeholders' types

The importance of stakeholder theory derives from the acknowledgment that a stakeholder group or individual can influence an organisations' objectives in an unexpected manner, rendering stakeholder theory an important tool, offering critical insight into the uncertain nature of the business environment (Parmar et al., 2010).

In terms of the engaging stakeholders, Bourne (2012, p. 7) suggested employing five steps as follows, within what is termed the 'Stakeholder Circle Methodology':

- Step 1: Identification of all stakeholders*
- Step 2: Prioritisation to determine who is important*
- Step 3: Visualisation (mapping) to understand the overall stakeholder community*
- Step 4: Engagement through effective communications*
- Step 5: Monitoring the effect of the engagement*

These steps provide a logical sequence and framework within which to understand more clearly how stakeholder theory can be applied in practice.

This research reviews some debates and criticism regarding the concepts of stakeholder theory; e.g. Antonacopoulou and Méric (2005), whose paper claims that stakeholder theory becomes a self-evident concept even though there is debate regarding the theory and its instrumental implementations and ideology (ibid, pp. 22, 31). Those who advocate the use of stakeholder theory view it as a continuously evolving theory. Additionally, Miles (2011) highlighted that there were more than 435 different definitions found for 'stakeholders' across 493 articles when they conducted their study in 2011. She acknowledged “this is problematic for both theoretical and empirical analysis” (Miles, 2011, p. 285).

Stakeholder theory as a concept is embedded in the HE literature, and is present both implicitly and explicitly in many domains (Antonacopoulou and Méric, 2005). The stakeholders in universities and business schools are generally agreed to be the staff, students, and employers.

Differences between studies arise when a particular study addresses an issue related exclusively to HE, or to evaluating the importance of a certain stakeholder regarding a single issue. For example, when students are highlighted as stakeholders the emphasis is placed on more individualistic elements and prioritising financial security (Paton et al., 2013, MacDonald, 2012, Cai, 2012), which might not necessarily be of interest to other stakeholders.

In addition, students as a stakeholder group are always considered when developing new approaches to learning to enhance learners' sensitivity to the dynamics of the surrounding environment (Lovik, 2011).

Slabá and Štarchoň (2014) study examined stakeholders in HE in Czech Republic and Slovakia from a marketing perspective, to capture how stakeholders are targeted and prioritised in marketing campaigns. Another study looked specifically at parents and students as stakeholders, reviewing the parental involvement in students deciding whether to live at home or study far away from home (Bradley-Geist and Olson-Buchanan, 2014).

Salem Khalifa (2010) in a review to business schools strategy asserted that attention to stakeholders' needs, especially value creation, should be deemed more important than competition. When evaluating the stakeholder concept reputation is key.

3.6 What is reputation?

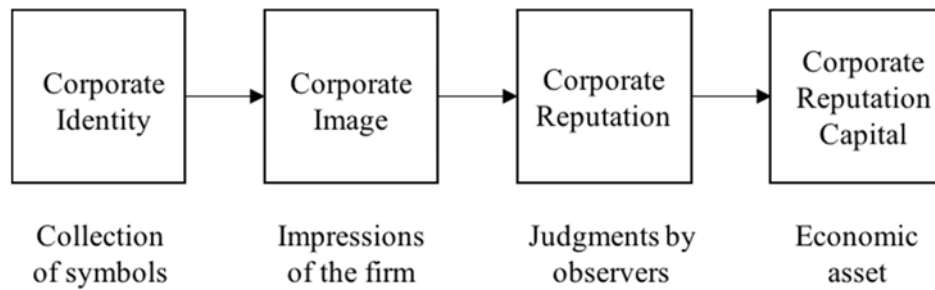
Reputation is a concept that has garnered attention increasingly in the academic literature. The number of publications discussing reputation have increased significantly in recent years (Lucas and Tan, 2013).

According to the Oxford Dictionary, reputation describes: "The beliefs or opinions that are generally held about someone or something" (Oxford Dictionary, 2016). Most, if not all, complexities related to the term 'reputation' in an academic context echo this definition in some way. According to Lange et al. (2011), one of the earliest and most widely used

definitions of reputation is that offered by Fombrun (1995) as “a perceptual representation of a company’s past actions and future prospects that describes the firm’s overall appeal to its key constituents when compared to other leading rivals” (p. 72). Additionally, from a multidisciplinary point of view, reputation has been addressed from different perspectives such as: economic, strategic, marketing, sociological, accounting, and organisational (Fombrun and van Riel, 1997). This research draws mainly on the organisational viewpoint, where reputation is seen through the lens of stakeholders’ perceptions. Several published papers have focused on examining different definitions and conceptualisations of reputation; for example Walker (2010) conducted a systematic literature review regarding the definition of corporate reputation, and concluded that “(1) reputation may have different dimensions and is issue specific, and (2) different stakeholder groups may have different perceptions of corporate reputations” (p. 357).

Barnett et al. (2006) offered a combination of definitions of corporate reputation aiming to deliver a comprehensive definition, as “Observers’ collective judgments of a corporation based on assessments of the financial, social, and environmental impacts attributed to the corporation over time” (p. 34).

The study examined reputation alongside concepts such as image, identity, and reputation as capital suggesting a sequential relationship between these features. The terms introduced are used interchangeably in many of these studies.



(Barnett et al., 2006, p. 33)

Figure 4 Disaggregating corporate reputation

This study is concerned predominantly with reputation as a construct rather than reputation as an asset. In capitalising reputation, it is mostly seen through the financial lens as an intangible asset of the organisation that might influence its value (Barnett et al., 2006). Clearly the principal objective posited by the research questions in this thesis relates to how reputation is constructed by stakeholders, before considering its potential implications and particularly how it could be considered as an asset in this context.

Elsewhere, Lange et al. (2011) reviewed the different definitions of reputation and suggested that three main conceptual dimensions responsible for defining Brooks et al. (2003) view of reputation; i.e. Being known, Being Known for Something, and Generalised Favourability. These dimensions are not mutually exclusive or discrete. Definitions can combine all three dimensions, or just one or two.

Being known is the simplest conceptualisation of reputation; therefore, an organisation is considered to have a good reputation if it is more visible in comparison to its competitors. It conceptualises reputation without any regard for what the organisation is known for, or how

positively it is known. Unsurprisingly, this conceptualisation is often used alongside other dimensions and is sometimes seen as an antecedent to reputation, rather than as a dimension of reputation (Lange et al., 2011, p.153); i.e. it is more relevant to corporate image, as presented in Barnett et al. (2006) figure above. Brooks et al. (2003) empirically examined familiarity with top companies, suggesting linking reputation to familiarity (i.e. Being Known) is unconvincing, which supports the notion that being known is usually associated with other dimensions.

The second dimension when defining reputation in the literature studied by Lange et al. (2011) is Being Known for Something, which extends a step forward, moving beyond Being Known to Being Known for Something. This dimension appeared as a single dimension in more studies than Being Known did. It also appeared in conjunction with other dimensions. The main difference between Being Known and Being Known for Something is that in the latter, “judgment is a central feature” (Lange et al., 2011, p. 158). Both Turban (2001) and Brooks et al. (2003) asserted that reputation is linked to the quality of an organisation’s activity (i.e. Being Known for Something).

The third dimension, as noted in Lange et al. (2011) study concerns Generalised Favourability. This dimension goes beyond Being Known for Something, to achieving the status of being favoured over one’s competitors. The conceptualisation of favour in the literature concerning reputation is seen both as a single dimension and one coupled with previously mentioned dimensions. This dimension shares with Being Known that it is not

specific to organisations' attributes but is rather an aggregated collective preference, sharing with the Being Known for Something that it does entail judgmental factors.

In fact, both Fombrun (1995) and Barnett et al. (2006) definitions of reputation were classified under the Generalised Favourability dimension of reputation by Lange et al. (2011). The importance of Lange et al (2011) classification is proved through more than 400 citations helped to map the different foundations of reputation definition.

Table 2 below is extracted from Lange et al. (2011) study comparing the three dimensions in terms of being specific and judgmental.

	Being Known	Being Known for Something	Generalised Favourability
Reputation attribute	Non-specific	Specific	Non-Specific
Stakeholder's Judgment	Non-judgmental	Judgmental	Judgmental

Table 2 Compare reputation dimensions

3.7 Reputation of Business Schools

The majority of studies regarding organisational reputation concern for-profit organisations. However, reputation as a concept associated with business schools has recently received considerable attention; e.g. Boyd et al. (2009), Corley and Gioia (2000), Cornelissen and Thorpe (2002), Rindova et al. (2010), Rindova et al. (2005), Safón (2009), Vidaver-Cohen (2007), and Turban (2001). These studies concerning the reputation of business schools employ unique approaches when defining and conceptualising reputation.

The process of connecting the ranking of attributes to the status of business schools with regard to their performance and reputation has received significant attention in multiple critiques. In a well-cited paper, entitled “The Rankings Game: Managing Business School Reputation”, Corley and Gioia (2000) employed a social constructionist (i.e. interpretivist) position to evaluate the reputation of business schools. They examined business schools’ rankings and discussed how schools engage in the so-called ‘ranking game’. They highlighted the motives behind business schools’ attention to reputation management, observing that, although ranking is beyond the control of business schools, it does affect the relationship between business schools and their stakeholders. Examples of this include the ability to apply selective admissions criteria, greater employment potential for graduates, and greater opportunities to attract the attention of funders’ to access possible funds. In other words, reputation is viewed as having a direct impact on the decisions made by stakeholders and on their relationships with the business school (Corley and Gioia, 2000). However, importantly for this research, their study acknowledges that reputation is a multi-stakeholder phenomenon. Corley and Gioia (2000) develop an understanding of reputation through interviews conducted with a single stakeholder group; i.e. deans of business schools.

In their discussion of business schools' reputation, Cornelissen and Thorpe (2002) suggest four principles to be considered by researchers. These principles also emerge when reviewing reputation research in general, and their aim is to measure business schools' reputations from a comprehensive perspective. The principles suggested are:

- 1. Distinguish external perceptions from internal assets*
- 2. Acknowledge the role of individuals and stakeholder groups in reputation formation*
- 3. Distinguish reputation and image based constructs*
- 4. Select measures and methodologies corresponding with the reputation construct (Cornelissen and Thorpe, 2002, pp. 173-5)*

These principles cover both theoretical and empirical aspects when studying reputation in general and business schools specifically.

Another study by (Turban, 2001) specifically reviewed the HE sector, exploring the attractiveness of universities as employers, suggesting familiarity is an important attractive feature for prospect staff. However, familiarity was not the only factor, but other factors such as the recruitment process were seen as attracting potential employees.

Some studies consider reputation as an asset for their organisation. For example, in their seminal study (cited more than 800 times at the time of writing up this thesis), Rindova et al. (2005) consider reputation as an asset to business schools. They “propose that reputation consists of two dimensions: (1) stakeholders' perceptions of an organization as able to produce quality goods and (2) organizations' prominence in the minds of stakeholders” (Rindova et al., 2005, p. 1033). The two dimensions proposed were classified as Being known for Something and Generalised Favourability by Lange et al. (2011). The study

confirmed that reputation is comprised of both these dimensions. It added that the Generalised Favourability dimension effects stakeholders' willingness to pay a premium for an organisation and the Being Known dimension positively affects the Generalised Favourability dimension as depicted in the figure below.

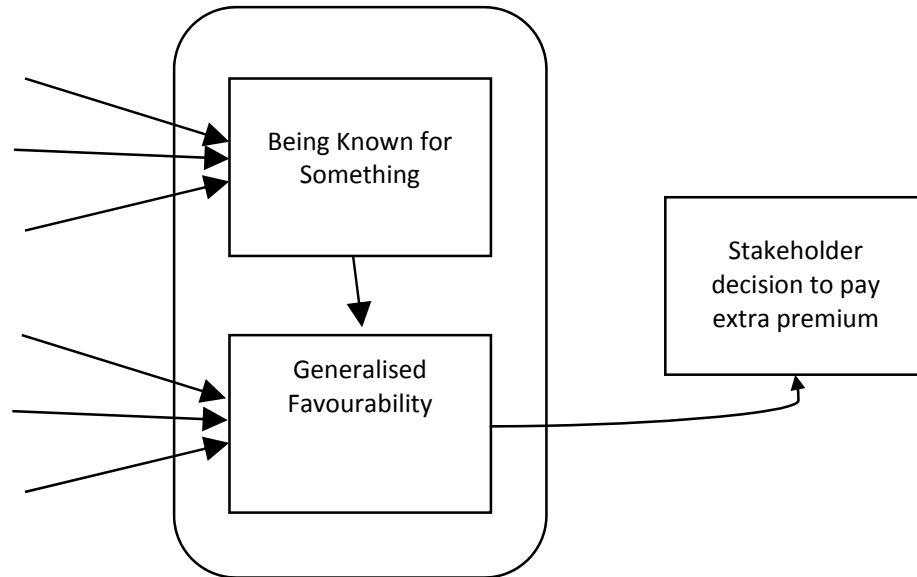


Figure 5 Dimension of Reputation and Stakeholder decision

In many quarters, rankings data is assumed to function as one measure of a business school's reputation (Vidaver-Cohen, 2007, p.278). This study acknowledges that reputation and rankings can be used interchangeably, but it also observes that ranking is mostly seen through the Generalised Favourability dimension of reputation, as in studies by Boyd et al. (2009) and Martins (2005).

3.8 Research Questions

The previous chapter and this one have demonstrated a number of gaps in previous research, revealing that little research has been carried out into business schools in Saudi Arabia.

Available data only describes numbers of students enrolled in universities and at business schools (MOE, 2016c) and there are no figures available that set out the destinations of business school graduates. Evidently, research examining universities in Saudi Arabia and business schools in particular, is extremely limited. This study examines the perceptions of various stakeholders in business schools in order to understand how their reputation is constructed, and investigates phenomena that have not yet been researched in the Saudi Arabian context.

The literature review identified three channels as a basis for the research questions posed by this research. The first channel relates to debates around business schools and business education in academic literature, and the fact that the majority of the mainstream publications reviewed centre on UK and US business schools. The second channel is informed by stakeholder theory, and its central role in understanding how different parties engage in relationships with business schools and each other. Finally, the third channel is informed by the concept of reputation and the different dimensions that contribute to it. This research draws on the dimensions by which reputation is defined by different scholars like Lange et al. (2011) and Rindova et al. (2005) to acquire an understanding of how the reputation of business schools might be constructed in the context of Saudi Arabia. The cultural, social, and religious factors that inform the studies are embedded and investigated via the three

channels. Publications and studies about Saudi Arabian HE examine HE and universities in general without specifically concentrating on business schools.

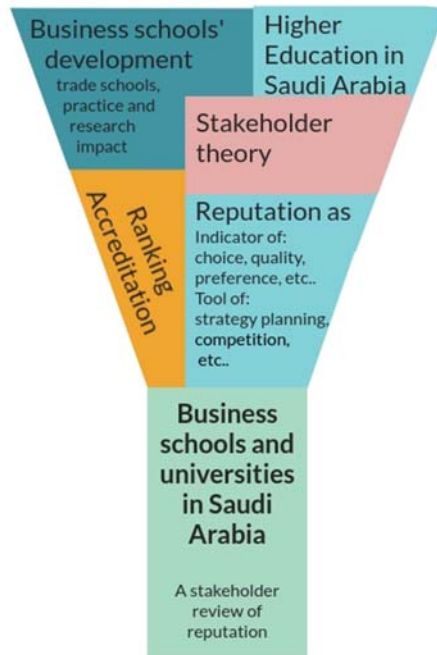


Figure 6 Research Funnel

The research questions posed in this thesis are:

RQ1. What are the distinctive characteristics of Saudi Arabian business schools and the Saudi Arabian HE sector?

RQ2. How do a range of key stakeholders view business education and business schools in Saudi Arabia?

- What do stakeholders expect from business schools in Saudi Arabia?

- How do stakeholders use reputation to evaluate business schools and universities in Saudi Arabia?
- What reputational factors have a potential impact on business schools' strategies?

3.9 Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework is presented below. At this stage, it is 'tentative and rudimentary' (Miles and Huberman, 1984), which reflects the exploratory nature of this study and the fact that it is the first of its kind in this context. The conceptual framework is a 'visual representation of the main things to be studied, the key factors, concepts and variables and the relationship between them' (Miles and Huberman, 1994:18). Figure 7 below illustrates the conceptual framework utilised in this thesis.

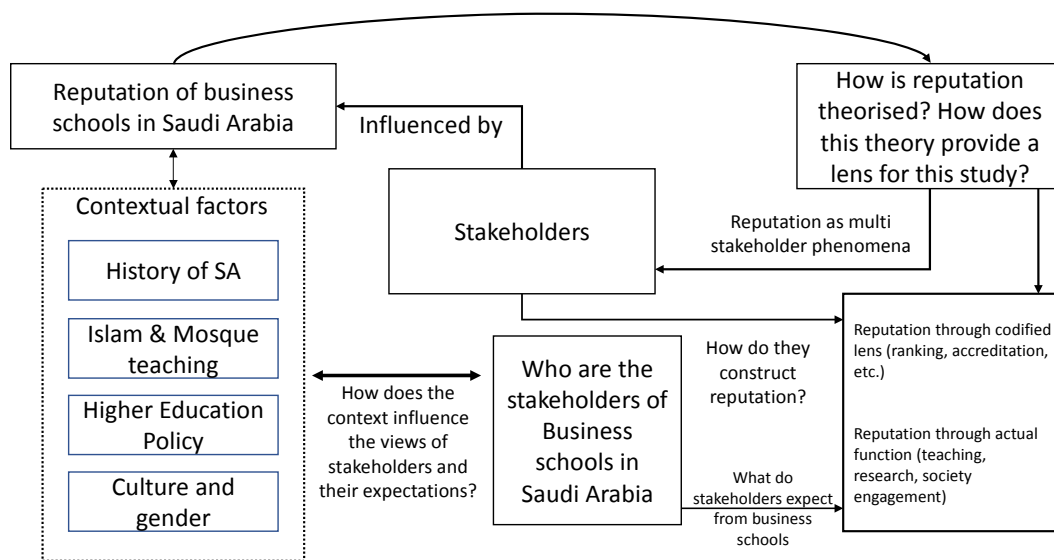


Figure 7 Stakeholder and Reputation Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study comprises of key areas of interest. Central to the framework are stakeholders, and as such they are the main research subject in this study. The evaluation of stakeholders benefitted mainly from stakeholder theory informed by Freeman (1984) theorisation. The context of Saudi Arabia is expected to play a significant role in uncovering how reputation is constructed in the minds of stakeholders in Saudi Arabia. Stakeholders in this study are not predefined in the way they have been in previous studies, such as by Corley and Gioia (2000) and Rindova et al. (2005). This study has its own unique approach, as will be detailed later in the Methodology chapter in relation to Template analysis, as promoted by King (2012) as a means to decide upon and cluster business schools' stakeholders in Saudi Arabia. The framework also appraises reputation as a construct (Barnett et al., 2006). As presented above in this literature review chapter, reputation as a concept has itself been thoroughly debated and associated discussions have been clearly identified (Walker, 2010). This research used the theorisation of reputation and its different dimensions (generalised favourability, being known, and being known for something) as suggested by Lange et al. (2011). This theorisation of reputation will be the foundation from which this thesis will assess how reputation is constructed among business schools' stakeholders in Saudi Arabia.

3.10 Conclusion

The literature review in this research highlighted the potential and validity of this research. Firstly, it discussed the overall situation concerning HE in Saudi Arabia currently, which suggested some distinctive characteristics relating to discussions of significance to HE. Some

of these are cultural while others relate to policies and regulations. Secondly, it was noted that stakeholders are unique and have unique interests, demands, and influences on business schools. Thus, their perception and impact on reputation might differ. Thirdly, that reputation itself as a concept is conceived of through multiple distinct dimensions. Thus, this research aims to fill the gap in the scarcity of literature regarding business schools in Saudi Arabia from a stakeholder and reputation viewpoint specifically through the consideration of localised factors, as presented in figure 7 above. It also aims to fill another gap in terms of the empirical examination of a different stakeholder perspective on business school reputation from a qualitative point of view to include the widest possible spectrum of business schools' stakeholders. This will be done by using the theorisation of reputation into three dimensions, as presented in table 2 empirically, and to answer the research questions as shown in the conceptual framework (figure 7) presented above.

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology employed when conducting this study. It begins by setting out the research approach and describing the philosophical foundation of the study. It then introduces the sampling technique, returning to the stakeholder concept outlined in Chapter Three, and introducing the criteria, and characteristics of each stakeholder group. The following section then discusses the details of the two phases of data collection, explaining how they complement one another. After this, access to the participants will be discussed in detail. The data collection method, which involved observation sessions and semi-structured interviews, will then be discussed to cover the theoretical fit of the method and the procedures applied. The analytical strategy and template analysis will then be presented, and its features, three phase developments, and compatibility with the research approach discussed. The software used to assist in the data analysis to support the process of interpretation will also be discussed. After which, the challenges that arose with regard to the languages used (i.e. Arabic being used in the interviews) when conducting the research will be explained. The following section will then discuss the ethical values associated with the research, to understand how they align with the ethical standards set out by the University of Liverpool. The final section in this chapter discusses rigorous research measures.

4.2 Research Approach

This research is best described as ‘exploratory’, in that it predominantly seeks to explore the phenomenon of business school reputation in the context of Saudi Arabia. The exploration that took place was principally necessitated by the need for additional research in the context of Saudi Arabian HE, specifically highlighting the role of business schools, as discussed in the previous chapters (see Figure 7 Stakeholder and Reputation Conceptual Framework). This section describes the approach taken to answer research question two and its sub questions:

RQ2. How do a range of key stakeholders view business education and business schools in Saudi Arabia?

- What do stakeholders expect from business schools in Saudi Arabia?
- How do stakeholders use reputation to evaluate business schools and universities in Saudi Arabia?
- What reputational factors have a potential impact on business schools’ strategies?

It is important when conducting research to understand and acknowledge the different approaches taken when establishing ‘reality’ or ‘truth’. The importance of understanding the research philosophy arises from the need to: (1) inform the research design and answer the research question, (2) acknowledge workable and non-workable designs, (3) supply the

researcher with assistance to create or modify a design that explores the research problem effectively (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012).

A research philosophy usually reflects the researcher’s own position while carrying out research. This position is important, as it outlines how truth and reality are constructed and how they are researched.

[O]ur meta-theoretical assumptions have very practical consequences for the way we do research in terms of our topic, focus of the study, what we see as “data”, how we collect and analyse the data, how we theorize, and how we write up our research accounts. (Cunliffe, 2010)

The philosophy of a research study influences the different stages of research and the choices made at each of those stages. Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) distinguish between different descriptions of the stages of research, discussing how the research philosophy impacts on subsequent decisions about methodology and methods.

Ontology	Philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality
Epistemology	A general set of assumptions about ways of inquiring into the nature of the world
Methodology	A combination of techniques used to research a specific situation
Methods and Techniques	Individual techniques for data collection, analysis, etc.

(Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 18)

Table 3 Ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods and techniques

Similarly, the levels are referred to by Crotty (1998) as: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods.

Epistemology	The theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and then in the methodology
Theoretical Perspective	The philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria
Methodology	The strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes
Methods	The techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research questions or hypothesis

(Crotty, 1998, p. 3)

Table 4 Epistemology, Theoretical Perspective, Methodology, and Methods

As there are no clear cut boundaries between different research philosophies and research stages, as each decision informs the choice made at the next stage, the choices put forward in this research follow the same order to establish a position. The following diagram shows the sequence of choices made in relation to the research. It intentionally presents details of the three stages at which decisions were made.

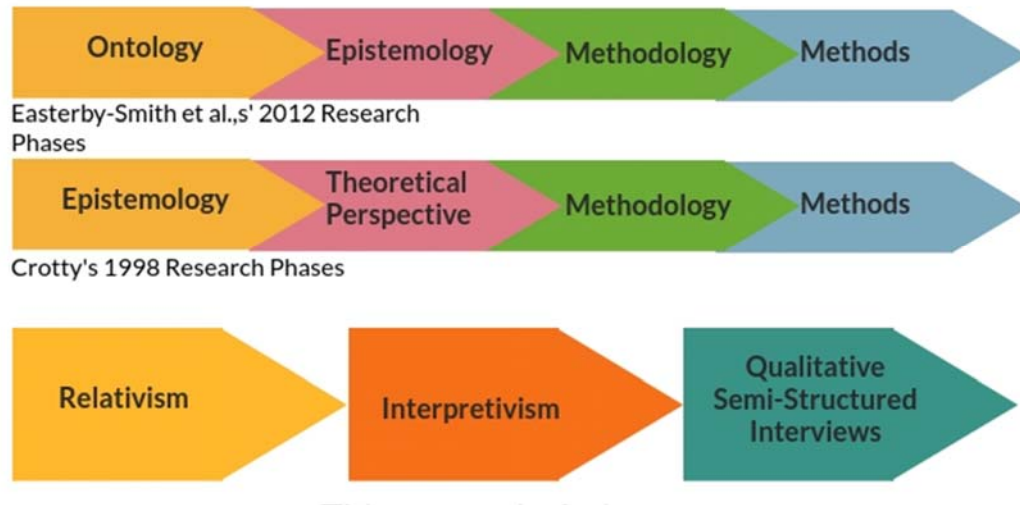


Figure 8 Research Choices

This research is situated in the ontological position of relativism, where the nature of reality is understood to comprise of many ‘truths’, and facts are seen as dependent on the observer’s viewpoint; this contrasts with other positions, such as realism, in which truth is assumed to be a single measurable entity (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.19). Acceptance of the existence of many possible truths has crucial implications on the process of conducting this research.

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) “proposes that natural reality and social reality are in themselves different kinds of reality and their investigation therefore requires different methods” (Crotty, 1998, p. 67).

A set of assumptions come into effect when inquiring about the nature of the world is referred to as ‘epistemology’ (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Subjectivism and objectivism are conceived of as at two opposite ends of this spectrum, along which a researcher might adopt a stance (Cunliffe, 2010). This research favours the subjective position; assuming “meaning,

sensemaking, and knowledge are relative to the time, place, and manner in which they are constructed” (Cunliffe, 2010). These epistemological positions are also referred to as interpretivism and positivism (Crotty, 1998). In this research, the research problem is considered from an interpretivist point of view and it is designed to encompass the key features of interpretivism shown in the table below such as the researcher being part of the researcher phenomena, attention to human interest, the aim to enhance understanding, and selective sampling. Interpretivism differs in several ways from positivism, specifically with regard to the researcher, the research subject(s), the research aim, etc. Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) seeks to clarify these differences:

	Positivism	Interpretivism
The observer	Must be independent	Is part of what is being observed
Human interest	Should be irrelevant	Is the main driver of science
Explanation	Must demonstrate causality	Aims to enhance their general understanding of the situation
Research process	Must work through hypothesis and deduction	Must gather rich data from which ideas are induced
Concepts	Need to be defined so that they can be measured	Should incorporate a stakeholder perspective
Units of analysis	Should be reduced to the simplest terms	May include understanding of the complexity of the ‘whole’ situation
Generalisation takes place via	Statistical probability	Theoretical abstraction
Sampling requires	Large numbers selected randomly	Small numbers of cases chosen for a specific reason

(Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 24)

Table 5 Contrasting implications of positivism and interpretivism

The research design of this study is based on an interpretivist approach, wherein the researcher becomes part of the observed phenomena, and therefore acknowledges that facts are co-constructed between the researcher and the research subjects (interviewees). Crotty (1998, p. 8) clarifies this position stating:

Truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world. There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered, but constructed.

This research is seeking to establish a general understanding; that is, unambiguous causal relationships are not being sought. No pre-determined hypotheses informing and guiding the course of the research were produced as would be the case for a research project with a positivist epistemology (for example Rindova et al. (2005) hypothesised reputation for business schools' price premium), as the research questions are exploratory, seeking general explanations for a range of features of interest. The analysis and enquiry process is consequently broad, introducing the many aspects of complexity that surround the research phenomenon, rather than detailing measurable attributes in a limited way.

From the very outset of the study, the author witnessed contradictions in the existing literature; these are not seen as conflicting truths, but as different explanations or interpretations proffered by various authors. For example, Rindova et al. (2005) examined business schools' reputations from a positivist stance, exploring causal relationships between elements of reputation and stakeholder choices, Vidaver-Cohen (2007) and Safón (2009) working from a similar perspective suggested a causal analysis of reputation leans towards the positivist position. On the other hand, Corley and Gioia (2000) studied business schools'

reputation in interviews from an interpretivist position. Similarly, Argenti (2000) and Cornelissen and Thorpe (2002) suggest ways in which to manage and increase business schools' reputations through embarking on research that takes an interpretivist position. This understanding is relevant to the collection and analysis of data; a process that acknowledges all the different opinions held by multiple research subjects (stakeholder interviewees) as valid as versions of the truth, or as multiple truths, describing the same phenomenon. This is important because discrepancies not only arise when describing different aspects of a study, but also when more than one subject describes a particular phenomenon.

4.3 Reflexivity

In qualitative research, acknowledgment of the role of the researcher is discussed through the concept of reflexivity. Here role and effect are acknowledged as part of the process of conducting research according to key outcomes (Anderson, 2010).

Reflexivity can occur at different levels in a single piece of research. At the core of this is the epistemological and ontological level. Being reflexive at this level develops the view that:

We cannot hope to find the 'best' way of carrying out research in order to produce new knowledge; we can only produce this knowledge from a stated perspective. (Anderson, 2010, p. 184)

And recognises that:

All research is affected by the preconceptions, theoretical, methodological or ontological, which the researcher brings to the research and in its interpretation. (Haynes, 2012, p. 81)

Other levels at which reflexivity can occur are the cultural, social, and political. The first instance in which reflexivity is present in this research concerns personal interest, where the researcher himself is interested in the research topic and its possible outcomes as outlined in the introduction chapter on page 17; this manifests throughout the data collection and analysis process.

A challenge to reflexivity arises when there is movement towards lending greater value to the researcher's voice (Fournier and Grey, 2000). This challenge is minimised in this research by ensuring the voice of the research subjects (interviewees) holds greater value than the researcher's interpretation when constructing an argument. A thoughtful review by the researcher was always put in place to ensure interpretations would be derived from participants' views. In addition, a rigorous research process ensured that the research questions and the interview guides would be derived from a review of relevant literature and previous studies in this field rather than being influenced by the researcher's own experience and interest.

4.4 Sample

The sample used in this research was directly linked to the research philosophy.

Interpretivism suggests a small number of cases purposefully selected represent an appropriate sample when conducting an interpretivist study (Bryman, 2012).

This section discusses the research sample and the sampling technique employed. A key challenge the researcher had to navigate involved gaining access to the members of the first

stakeholder group, this challenge posed a risk that forced the researcher to change the research agenda and direction (Saunders, 2012). The researcher was able to locate email addresses for some members, who could then be invited for interview. The researcher was also able to contact former tutors, some of whom were higher up the hierarchy than they had been previously. Among these, some now hold senior positions either within universities or at the MoHE. The researcher was therefore able to gain access to additional participants from other stakeholder groups through these personal contacts, in a manner described as the snowball technique, which “involves asking participants for recommendations of acquaintances who might qualify for participation (Robinson, 2014, p. 37).

In purposive sampling, often (but by no means exclusively) a feature of qualitative research, researchers hand-select cases to be included in a study sample based on their judgment of their typicality or their possession of the particular characteristics being sought. In this way, they build up a sample that is satisfactory in number and fits their specific needs (Cohen et al., 2011, p.156).

The purposive (non-probability) sampling technique was identified as the best fit for this research, and it is used in many cases to access people with significant experience and knowledge in the field of study as a first stakeholder group. There are also some groups with a relatively small number of participants (for example: policy makers and senior academics) rendering purposive sampling more useful. Stakeholder groups were identified as detailed later in this chapter, as on page 92.

4.5 Data Collection

The study data was collected by employing two methods: observations and interviews. Interviews were the main data collection method, although observations were used in the early stages of the research to extend perspectives and gain greater understanding of what is an under-researched area, i.e. business schools in Saudi Arabia. The following sections discuss in detail each data collection method and its unique contribution to the research.

4.5.1 Observations

As noted above, the main reason for observations is to gain a broader perspective. The researcher gained access to observe students engaged in their classes at a Saudi Arabian business school, attending some of their lectures. The school could be classified as in between well-established accredited schools and those at newly established universities. Most universities in Saudi Arabia can be classified in this middle range (Mazi and Altbach, 2013). The group of students observed were studying in the final year of their programme, and so were drawn from different disciplines within the business school.

The researcher was permitted to attend lectures in one course and to participate in class discussions. He was also granted the opportunity to have individual discussions with students in the class either before or after the lecture. The observation sessions were not directly designed to answer a specific research question, but to gain an insider view of a business school environment. Ultimately, they helped to re-shape the research questions and the interview guide.

4.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

The main enquiry method for the research was semi-structured interviews. These were considered a suitable approach because of their compatibility with the research aim, objectives, and philosophical stance.

In semi-structured interviews, the interview process is intended to be flexible, and is usually informed by an 'interview guide' comprising a set of questions that the interviewees can ask using the same wording. The questions asked need not to follow the same order as outlined, and additional questions can be added if the interviewer wishes to explore some responses further. (Bryman, 2012, p.470-1)

The interviews conducted were semi-structured and so minimal restrictions were placed on the topics and flow of the discussion. This allowed the interviewees to respond freely to the questions posed, and the responses from the interviewer directed the discussion along lines that supported follow up and clarification (Bryman, 2012). The interviews followed the same standard, and were all audio recorded after informed consent was gained from the interviewees as detailed later in page 119. Some of the interviewees were met repeatedly during the first and second phases of the study, while most were only met during one phase only.

4.5.3 Research Phases

The data collection for the research took part in two phases, as it was collected at two different points in time. As the research subjects, the interviewees, were based in Saudi Arabia and the researcher was based in the UK, it was difficult to gain instant access to them.

Therefore, the data collection had to be conducted at times when the researcher could be in Saudi Arabia. This constraint was used in a positive way to improve the second phase of the research according to lessons learned and an analysis of the initial data. It also proved useful in assisting the researcher to develop a research approach and aims, as time elapsed between the data collection phases. It was determined that a preliminary analysis of the first phase should be performed before compiling all the collected data, rather than waiting for completion of the data collection process. Details from both phases are described below:

4.5.3.1 First Phase

The first phase of the study took place early in the research process. Its aim was to acquire a general understanding of business and management education in Saudi Arabia, and advanced the research by drafting key themes; confirming the stakeholders' identities and shaping the research questions. The study also consisted of interviews and informal discussions undertaken by predefined stakeholders.

This phase of the study consisted of interviews and observation sessions; these are discussed later in this chapter (see page 85). Observations mainly took place during lectures and student presentations, and informal discussions took place after or before some of the lectures were attended, highlighting additional details associated with the students' experiences.

Discussions also took place with current business school students and some teaching staff.

Interviews also took place with pre-identified stakeholders, mainly senior academics and key figures in HE portrayed as policy maker stakeholder group. Decisions were made on the basis

that they would provide a greater insight into and understanding of the HE industry in general, and business schools specifically.

4.5.3.2 Second phase

The second phase consisted of semi-structured interviews with participants from each stakeholder group, as detailed below. Interviews with all stakeholder groups were accompanied by a set of questions and themes, which needed to be addressed during the interviews. The majority of the questions were common to all stakeholder groups, while others were specific. Some garnered more attention from some stakeholder groups than others. As the aim of the study was to explore stakeholders' views of the business school setting in Saudi Arabia, it was not in the interests of the researcher to generalise the findings or claim the results were representative. The emphasis was instead on the quality and richness of the information gathered in the interviews, and on the different possibilities raised.

4.5.4 Interview Questions

As the interviews conducted for the research were semi-structured, no fixed set of questions was compiled. Instead a guide was formulated; which is defined by Bryman (2012, p. 712) as:

A rather vague term that is used to refer to the brief list of memory prompts of areas to be covered that it is often employed in unstructured interviewing or to the somewhat more structured list of issues to be addressed or questions to be asked in semi-structured interviewing.

The guide was constructed focusing on effectively collecting information to further understanding about stakeholders' views regarding the reputation of business schools in Saudi Arabia. It was informed by different dimensions and perspectives on reputation, as seen in the academic literature, through: being known, being known for something, and generalised favourability (Lange et al., 2011). The main intention here was to assess:

- The dominance of any particular dimension of any stakeholder group or individual interviewee to answer the second research question and its sub questions; and
- The construction of different perspectives among stakeholders to understand the diverse ways in which stakeholders construct reputation, as well as points of agreement. A further aim was to derive the answer to the research question: How do stakeholders use reputation to evaluate business schools and universities in Saudi Arabia?

Thus, potential questions to ask were established as follows:

1. What do you know about business schools or business education in this country?
 - This question was intended to relate to the reputation of business education, i.e. the 'Being Known' dimension.
 - It was also intended to explore reputation from a signalling perspective.
2. How do you view business schools and business education in general?
 - i.e. the generalised favourability dimension of reputation.
3. Which are the best business schools in Saudi Arabia? Why?
4. Why are they better, from your viewpoint?
5. Why do you think this business school is better than others?

6. Does business education offer greater potential and appeal more than other disciplines?

All these questions collectively help to answer the first research question: What are the distinctive characteristics of Saudi Arabian business schools and the Saudi Arabian HE sector?

The use of the term ‘reputation’ and its Arabic translation ‘Som’aa’ was intentionally omitted during the interviews for several reasons. First, that there would be differences between individuals’ understanding of the term ‘reputation’. Second, the interviewees had to be given a chance to introduce the concept of reputation in their own way.

4.6 Stakeholder Identification

In this study, the stakeholders at business schools and involved in business education in Saudi Arabia extend beyond those identified in the literature and previous studies (see Corley and Gioia (2000), Rindova et al. (2005), Boyd et al. (2009)) that dealt with policy makers working at business schools, employers, and students. In this study, access was gained to senior policy makers within the government who have a national perspective on the future of HE and business education in Saudi Arabia. Although the number of respondents in this category is low, this reflects the seniority of these interviewees who were charged, at the time of the interviews, with planning the future of HE in Saudi Arabia. The study also includes a category of stakeholders comprising families and parents of students. Data from this group are quite limited as the span of this research would not allow proper sampling for them.

However, the decision to include them here is based on the importance assigned to them in constructing reputation and influencing their children's decisions (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2000). In one of the final sections of this thesis that deals with proposals for future research, it is suggested that an examination of the perceptions of families and parents would be a fruitful area for an in-depth study. However, this research did uncover a number of useful insights that warrant inclusion in the thesis.

The choice of stakeholders in this research is influenced by its research questions. Hence, the research attempts to establish an appropriate stakeholder categorisation was based on the literature relating to business schools and studies of reputation (Corley and Gioia, 2000, Rindova et al., 2005, Boyd et al., 2009). One of the research interests was to identify who the stakeholders for business schools in Saudi Arabia really are. This interest is derived by business schools, outcomes and performance, which means that stakeholders who fulfil and use them are involved. For this purpose, stakeholders were clustered at either the supply or demand side in regard to business schools. Furthermore, the interest in HE policy and its effects called for the inclusion of policy makers and ministry officials, the interest of business schools' contribution to economy called for inclusion of employers and policy makers. The supply side comprises policy makers and academics, while the demand side comprises students and employers. The inclusion of the wider range of stakeholders fulfils the research aim to investigate the differences among stakeholders as well. Parents and families of students were included as a stakeholder groups following a suggestion from interviewee [SA2], who cited parental faith in the value of a course as a reason for choosing a university; it is therefore assumed that their relationship to business schools and universities mediates

that of their offspring. Identifying stakeholders for this research contributes to the central part of this research conceptual framework as shown in the figure below:

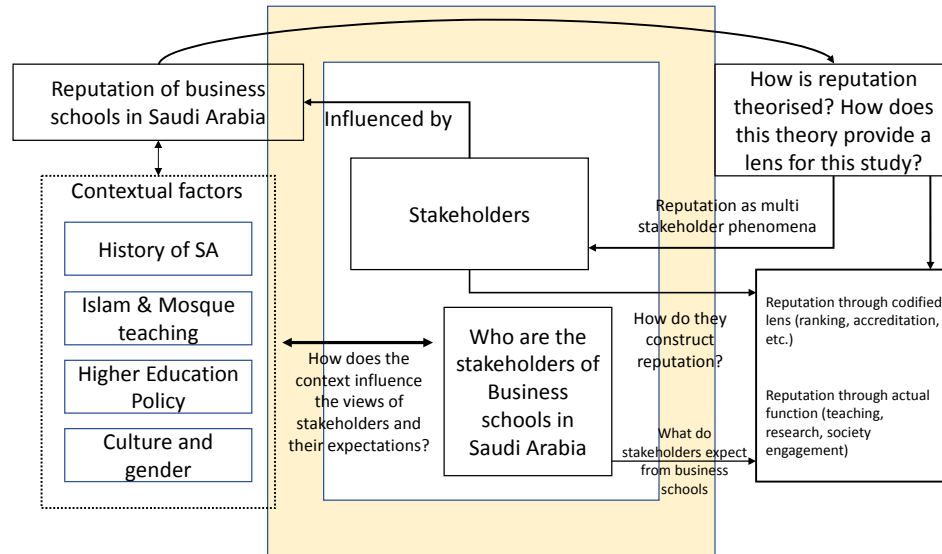


Figure 9 Conceptual Framework, central

It was decided that senior academics and policy makers would be the first groups interviewed, because they would be expected to have a more extensive knowledge and broader understanding of the parameters of the topic. This was a decision that proved valuable and informed the author's later modifications to his list of preferred stakeholders. Additional details about the outcomes from early interviews and how they helped the researcher to develop and move the study forward will be detailed later in this chapter.

Differentiation between employers did not emerge as a clear division in the early stages when designing the research. It was acknowledged by the researcher, however, that the labour market comprises many differences and the needs of employers might vary in a number of

ways. However, it was not considered necessary within the remit of this study to investigate these differences in relation to specific employer groups, but rather to consider them as key recipients of business school's output (i.e. graduates). The first few interviews revealed however, that dividing the labour market into the public and private sectors would assist the researcher by adding a further dimension to the data analysis. Again, this differentiation process proved valid because there are significant differences between them in hiring, and promotion procedures as will come later in the Findings and Discussion chapters.

As discussed previously, the interviews and discussion sessions were conducted in two phases. The first phase had a general and wide-ranging focus, and the second a more specific focus. The first phase included semi-structured interviews, informal discussions, and observation sessions. The second phase comprised semi-structured interviews only. Two interviews took a one-to-many format, whereas, the remaining interviews were conducted one-to-one. The two one-to-many were those conducted with a business school dean and some of department heads in the same business school, and with consultants in the ministry (policy makers). Both when the researcher arrived to conduct interviews expressed the interest to be at once with more time space rather than limited one-to-one. This researcher was in favour of relaxed time frame to meet the exploratory aim of the research. One of these interviews lasted more than 90 minutes which would not happen if done in one-to-one format. The total number of participants interviewed for the semi-structured interviews was twenty-three, ten in the first phase and thirteen in the second. The table below presents data from all the research participants, describing the phases they were involved in, the nature of that involvement, and acronyms assigned to them.

#	Group	Identifier	Phase
1	Policy Makers	SA2	One
2		SA3	One
3		SA4.1	One
4		SA4.2	One
5		SA4.3	One
6		SA5	Two
7	Senior Academics	SA1	One
8		SA2.1	One
9		SA2.2	One
10		SA6	Two
11	Teaching Academics	TA1	Two
12		TA2	One
13		TA3	Two
14	Employers	SE1	Two
15		SE4	Two
16		SE2	Two
17		SE3	Two
18		SE5	Two
19	Students and their Families	SS3	One
20		SS2	Two
21		SS1	Two
22		SF1	Two
23		SF2	Two

Table 6 List of Interviewees

Further to the phases mentioned previously, the table below shows the distribution of interviewees across the two phases:

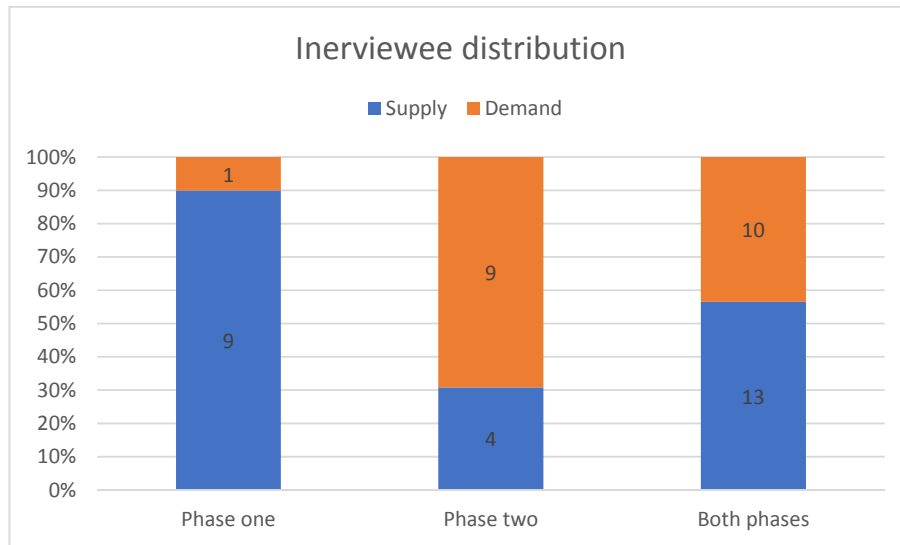


Figure 10 Phase distribution of interviewees

The sections below describe each stakeholder group’s characteristics and offer some information regarding each interviewee.

4.6.1 Policy makers

This was the smallest stakeholder group in terms of total population, and included six individuals with different roles. They are all in occupations that empower them to make decisions and they each have some influence on the course of HE, either in the country overall, or within specific institutes. All the interviewees in this group were able to make a unique contribution to the data gathered.

Some of these interviewees are also authors or editors of key books about HE in Saudi Arabia, published both in Arabic and in English. These publications include a critical review of HE in the country, and others highlight the issues and challenges faced, and offer

suggestions for future development. Among the publications are discussions offering both a historical review and contemporary critique of HE in Saudi Arabia.

SA2: The Dean of a leading business school in Saudi Arabia. Three department heads were also present (SA2.1-SA2.3 below as senior academics). This discussion was mainly led by the Dean, with additional answers offered by the other three members present. He was the Dean of a leading business school in Saudi Arabia, a member of a university council, and a member of several national committees, one of which is responsible for designing the national HE development plan, the 'AAFAQ'. He was also involved in getting business schools accredited by the AACSB.

SA3: An interview with a retired teaching academic in the first phase. He previously worked at a leading business school and has also worked in the private sector in managerial and consultancy posts. He also worked as a consultant to a Deputy Minister at the MoHE. He is active on social networks and had more than 35K followers on Twitter at the time of the interview. He also engages in online dialogue with people regarding issues associated with entrepreneurship, marketing, and customer satisfaction. His experience thus supports the claim that he has sufficient knowledge and understanding of the areas discussed during the interview.

SA4.1: One member of the group of three senior academics was working in a research centre attached to the MoHE. The members of this group differed by discipline, but are not mentioned here to protect the participants' anonymity. They were interviewed in the first phase.

SA4.2: The second member of the group mentioned above. He was also a member of several committees responsible for managing HE in Saudi Arabia. The researcher met him for a second time and engaged in some informal discussions about some aspects related to the earlier interview.

SA4.3: The third member of the group mentioned above. He has worked in teaching and management duties before joining the consultation team. He was also a member of several committees in the academic field.

SA5: An expatriate consultant at the MoHE. He previously worked at US universities and is currently working for the National Accreditation Agency attached to the MoHE.

4.6.2 Senior academics

Another elite group is the senior academics group. Members of this group were not considered policy makers in the HE industry but had significant experience in HE. The authors' criteria for classifying an interviewee in this group included: having worked in the field of HE for more than 20 years; currently holding or having previously held a senior position at a HE institute; and holding a PhD degree. After the interviews were completed, one of the interviewees in this group was appointed to one of the most senior positions in the education hierarchy in the country by royal decree. Below are some more details about each of the interviewees in this group.

SA1: A senior academic interviewed during the first phase. He has worked in several academic posts, and was the Dean of Admissions for a large vocational college. He was a member of the founding committee of one of the earliest private business schools in the country. He has also worked for some government and non-government organisations in areas related to education practice and policy. Previously he had gained significant experience in HE, and had taken on vocational training in various roles as a teacher, a department head, and a Dean. His experience was also evident in discussions held when working for different types of HE institution.

SA2.1-SA2.3: The department heads mentioned above (SA2 written alone indicates responses from the main interviewee only). The main interviewee reminded everyone several times during the interview that what he was expressing were opinions, and that others were welcome to disagree or add to any point they wish. Therefore, anything he said that was not contested or added to by the others was considered jointly held for the purpose of the interview analysis.

SA6: A senior academic who has worked in several academic and consulting posts in Saudi Arabia and abroad. He is the co-founder of a leading training centre which was formed as part of a huge government knowledge initiative to deliver targeted management and leadership training to top executives throughout the country. The programme he designed recruits well known lecturers from leading universities, and is in high demand. It is considered unique inside the country. Being an academic known to senior decision makers for his involvement in leadership and management training in both the private and public

sector, gives him both an academic and practical outlook on management education. He also had no formal ties with the education system in Saudi Arabia at the time he was interviewed and his inputs were principally from a practitioner perspective.

4.6.3 Academics in business schools

The criteria applied here were not restrictive and allowed diversity in the selection process, including academics from different schools and both local and expatriate academics. In total, three interviewees comprised this stakeholder group. These interviewees were from two different universities: a more elite university accredited by AACSB and a more recently established (2003) one (MOE, 2015c).

TA1: An expatriate teaching academic from a leading business school. He has been responsible for the school's accreditation profile. The school had successfully gained AACSB accreditation, and then had maintained and renewed it successfully after five years had elapsed. He does not have close ties with the business and management environment in Saudi Arabia.

TA2: An expatriate teaching academic with no close ties to the Saudi business environment. However, he runs a number of businesses in his home country.

TA3: A Saudi teaching academic, recently promoted to Deputy Dean. He has experience teaching and in other roles within the university, including administrative posts, and university level committee membership.

4.6.4 Students and Parents of Students

The students of business schools are the stakeholder group with the largest population. They are also the main stakeholder group in business schools and an essential vehicle for transferring the teaching offered into their practice. Especially considering the limited effect of research on practice (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013). It is not possible to gather a general view about business schools from the students that attend them in a study of this nature. In total, 28 students were included in the first phase of the study in the observation session (see page 87). Two students were also interviewed, each with different characteristics (as detailed below), in order to ensure some diversity among the interviewees.

SS1: A student at an expanding business school. He was close to graduation at the time of the interview. He intends to enrol in business and management studies, but has not chosen what university to attend.

SS2: A student at a growing business school who has moved to a university nearer home from another university. Both his previous and current studies relate to management.

SS3: A group of 28 students at a growing university in their final year, studying different business school disciplines (e.g. management, MIS, i.e. management information systems, accounting, marketing, and finance) were observed in the first phase. There were some informal discussions and conversations, as well as notes drawn from the classroom discussions. No students from a specific discipline dominated the discussions and the difference between these disciplines was not assessed for this research.

Additionally, the first phase of data collection, as discussed earlier, led to the suggestion that parents and families of students and prospective students play a key role in students' decisions about studying for a degree at a business school (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2000). Thus, this large stakeholder group was included in the study. Two parents were targeted for interview as parent stakeholders and asked to share their thoughts, views, and interests in relation to business schools and business education, particularly concerning their sons/daughters.

SF1: A parent whose children are not yet in a university, but soon will be. He has a bachelor's degree in Management Information Systems and some experience in the banking sector.

SF2: A parent with two children already at university and others yet to go to university. He works in the private sector and has more than 20 years' experience.

4.6.5 Employers

To further the discussion earlier in the literature regarding the labour market in Saudi Arabia, and the differences between the public and private sector, the researcher targeted four officials working in recruitment departments. One was based in the government sector, one in

a semi-government agency¹, and the other two in the private sector. They all have significant experience recruiting employees at various levels into their organisations.

SE1: A human resources manager in a semi-governmental organisation who studied in a leading local business school and acquired a Masters from the US in Human Resources. He has also worked in the private sector, and was involved with other businesses while in this post.

SE2: A Saudi business consultant, working at the local branch of an international consulting firm. He was interviewed at a career fair targeting Saudi graduates.

SE3: A Saudi member of a recruiting team targeting Saudi graduates. He was also interviewed at a career fair. There were no questions included in the interview regarding his personal experience or background due to time restrictions.

SE4: A Saudi member of a recruiting team who attends career fairs targeting Saudi graduates for civil posts. As with the previous interviewee, there no questions were included in the interview concerning his experience and background due to time restrictions.

¹ Semi-government agencies are those institutes operating under commercial law but are fully owned by government. Their culture is not as bureaucratic as the government sector and not as competitive as the private sector.

SE5: Private sector senior manager involved in recruitment and candidate evaluation with responsibility for IT related aspects and an interest in managerial practices, especially in the area of Human Resources.

4.7 Data Analysis

The analysis performed on the data was based on a thematic analysis approach, classified by King (2012) as a form of template analysis. This approach acknowledged that one of the main features of thematic analysis is its flexibility (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The main characteristic of template analysis is that it “balances a relatively high degree of structure in the process of analysing textual data with the flexibility to adapt it to the needs of a particular study” (King, 2012, p.426). When engaging in template analysis, individual interviews are regarded as the best mode of inquiry. This method is also suitable for analysing data from focus groups. Epistemologically, template analysis can be used as part of a social constructionist/interpretivist research design, wherein the underlying assumption is that multiple interpretations, which depend on the researcher, their position, and the study context, are possible (King, 2012).

The preference for template analysis over Grounded Theory emerged from the philosophical and procedural aspects of this research. Although grounded theory has developed in multiple directions; its most widely used applications were informed by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Glaser (1992), both cited in King (2012), for whom a realist approach is most dominant, and researchers, “have mostly claimed to be discovering the 'real' beliefs, attitudes, values and so

on of the participants in their research” (King, 2012, p.428). Template analysis is also less prescriptive than grounded theory, including fewer 'must follow' procedures, affording researchers the flexibility to tailor the method to meet their own requirements (King, 2012).

Additionally, King (2012) suggests there are three features of template analysis that researchers prefer to the generic form of template analysis: These are “the flexibility of the coding structure, the use of a priori themes, and [the] use of the initial template” (p.429). Two additional features of template analysis, which ensure it is well-suited to this research are parallel coding and integrative themes. When conducting parallel coding, it is possible to assign more than a single code to the same text. The use of parallel coding does not arise if the researcher does not favour a positivist approach (King, 2012). Integrative themes are those that arise across the clusters of all themes; thus, it would be problematic to simply position them at the top-level or as sub-themes, as they would then lose their value, as derived from being across the themes. “One way to conceptualize integrative themes is as undercurrents running through participants' accounts; often, perhaps, not addressed explicitly but very apparent to the careful reader” (King, 2012, p.432).

4.7.1 The template journey

This section discusses the development of the thematic structure of this research using an a priori template. The template was developed using a process of continuous adaption and refinement. Three stages can be identified as key milestones in the development of the template: First, a largely descriptive form was developed following the preliminary literature review and the research proposal; second, a new form was developed during the preliminary

analysis of the first phase of interviews (this was added to later and provided guidance for conducting the final set of interviews); and finally a third template was produced after the second phase of interviews, which was then used to present and report all the collected data.

4.7.2 The use of mind mapping

The continuous development and refinement of the template required the use of easy-to-follow tools. King (2012) refers to the possibility of using mind mapping as a tool when developing a template.

Mind maps are defined by Buzan and Buzan (2010) below:

A mind map is a visual and graphic holistic thinking tool that can be applied to all cognitive functions, especially memory, creativity, learning and all forms of thinking. It has been described as 'The Swiss Army knife for the brain' (p.21)

There are numerous software tools available for the purpose of creating and managing mind maps. The instrument selected for this research is iThoughts, which offers the ability to use cloud storage and provides multiple platforms. It is available for the laptop, the iPad and the iPhone, which means the mind map could be updated at any time in any place. The first round of the mind map (i.e. the original template) is in the Appendices.

4.7.3 Version one: the basic set up

The first template form offered less precision, defining the main ideas that drove the research in the early stages based on findings from existing literature; however, it established some

key themes in relation to business schools and business education in Saudi Arabia. The initial points includes referred to the critiques and challenges faced by business schools, especially those observed by (Ghoshal, 2005), highlighting the ethical dilemma encountered by business schools and the consequences of teaching in practice. Mintzberg (2004) work also played a role in informing the form of the first template.

In addition, the question of choice and preference was integrated into the framework. One of the initial research motives, as outlined in the introduction, was to explore the reasons why business schools and management education in Saudi Arabia appear to have a lesser reputation than other academic schools. The initial template was of the form shown below in Figure 9, in terms of the aspects it examines.



Figure 11 First template version

The first template provided a guide for the interviews and the data collection process and was helpful for establishing key areas of interest, which the semi-structured interviews then aimed to target.

4.7.4 Version Two: The data collection guide

The second form of the template was developed after a further review of the business school literature, and after several interviews had been conducted. The more extensive literature review helped to highlight the most salient topics under discussion regarding business schools in general, and potential triggers for choices. During the development of this form, it emerged that stakeholder theory could prove vital to the research design. Business schools and universities, similar to most other organisations, have multiple stakeholders who are required to interact with one another. The literature relating to business schools identified key tensions between business schools and their stakeholders, and among the stakeholders themselves, in terms of their relationships with business schools and universities.

A further concept that was integrated into the second template emerged from both the literature and several interviews that took place in the initial phase of the study; i.e. reputation. The concept of reputation arose during the interviews implicitly when discussing choice and preference, and explicitly in responses that led to mentions of reputation by some interviewees, even though they were not asked to discuss ‘reputation specifically’ (see page 90).

The inclusion of stakeholder theory as a key component of the template is the most striking difference in this version of the template as shown below:

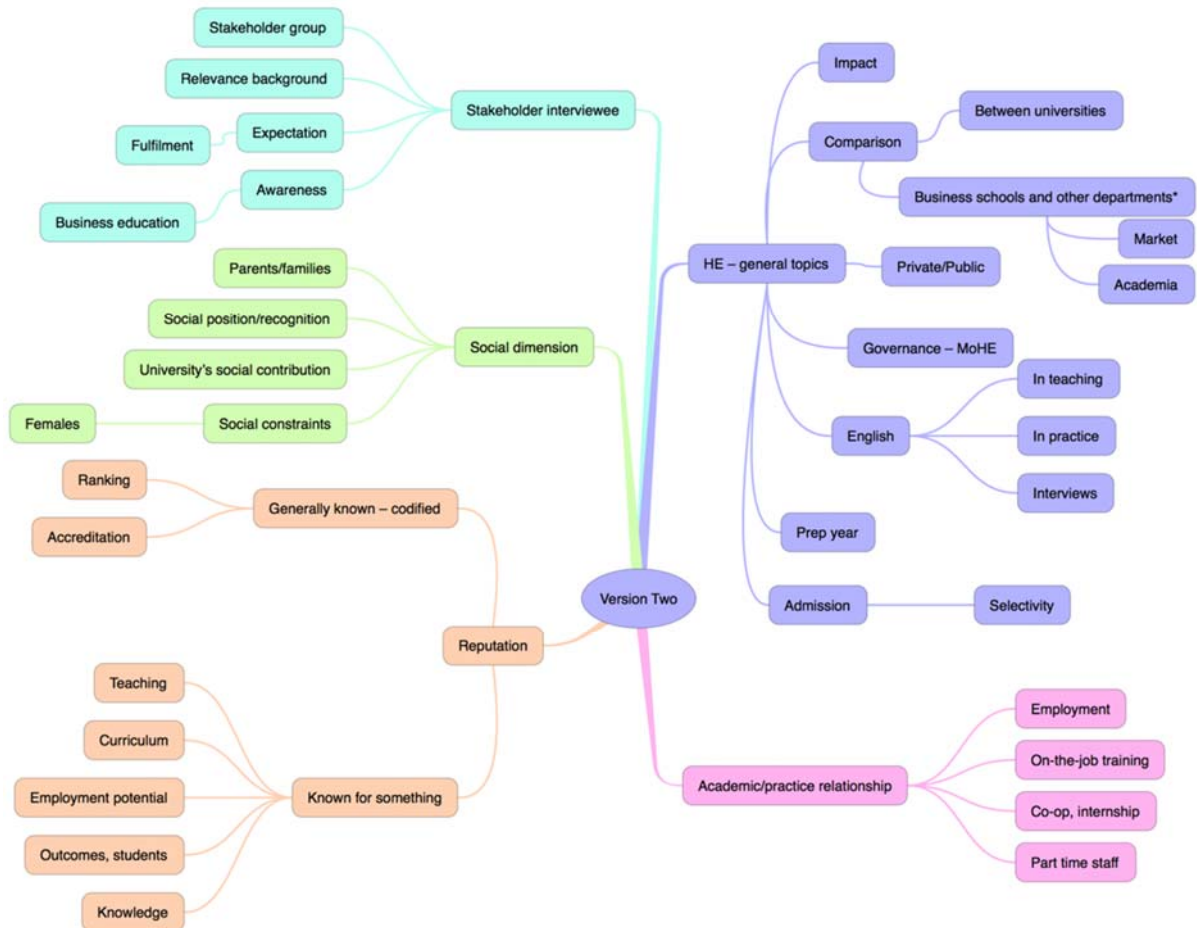


Figure 12 second template version

The interview guide that resulted after developing the second form of the template did not include the term 'reputation'. This was intentional to ensure consistency with the previous interviews by avoiding any clear mention of reputation as a term, and in recognition of the

complexity that informs reputation as a construct. It was assumed that revealing the term might lead the discussion away from a path the participants might have otherwise taken.

4.7.5 Version Three: The analytical model

The final form of the template was that used to analyse and present the research findings. This form involved some merging, deletion, and insertion of new codes after the data had been collected, as suggested by King (2012). The final version comprised two main parts: the first related to contextual attributes, where interviewees discussed issues in the local context and their relationship to HE. This part constituted the first segment of findings, commencing on page 130 and discussing aspects related to the Saudi Arabian context. The second part included additional subdivisions and was constructed around the modelling of reputation according to two dimensions: Being Known and Being Known for Something (Lange et al., 2011), as discussed in the Literature Review. It also used the three missions of universities to organise sub-themes and categories. The final template described:

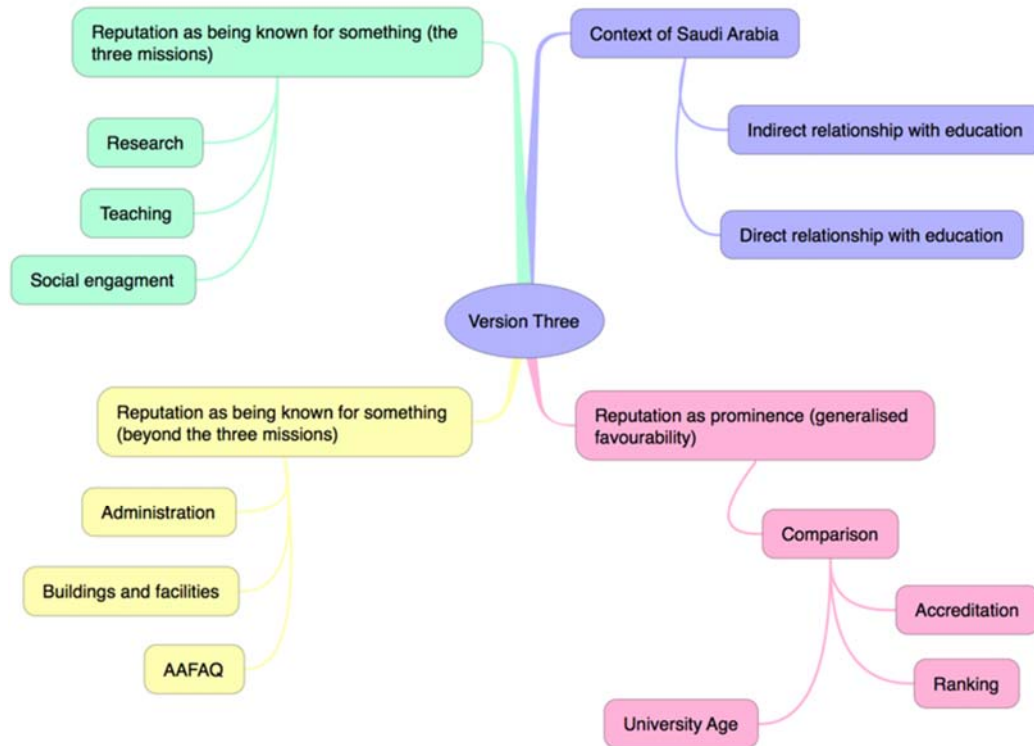


Figure 13 Third template version

The versions of the template (mind maps) are mapped to the key research activities and phases of the research in the diagram below:

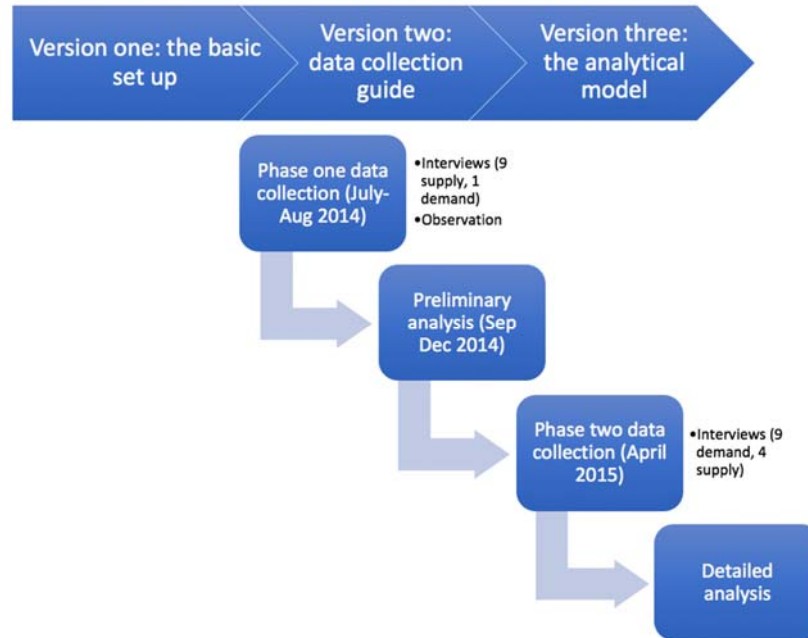


Figure 14 Research time scale

4.8 Analysis Software

The use of analysis software can ensure the rigour of a study, but to achieve this, it is crucial to acknowledge that software is a supportive tool and that its main role is to organise themes and allow access to themes as components of a complete data set. It was suggested by (King, 2012) that mind maps are useful tools for template analysis, and therefore it was decided that initial themes should be coded manually on hard copies of transcripts before transference to analysis software. In this research, two packages were selected for the data analysis. Each was used to support a specific research function: iThoughts for mind-mapping (as discussed earlier in relation to the use of mind mapping) and NVivo for coding purposes.

NVivo belongs to a group of software tools known as CAQDAS (computer-assisted qualitative data analysis); as yet there is no known industry leader responsible for this group of software (Bryman, 2012). The choice of software was based on the availability of the software itself and whether its use could be supported by the university's Computer Services Department.

The experience of conducting this research revealed that although qualitative data analysis packages have developed sufficiently to accommodate many of researchers' requirements, they still lack some essential features. For example, working on different computers or platforms is relatively complex, and the transference of information is not really as 'seamless' as specifications imply. NVivo projects are sometimes relatively large in size, especially where there is a necessity to afford access to many resources as in this case. As the research project exceeded 500 MB, the project file could not be saved on the cloud, meaning hardware such as pen drives were needed to move the data from one PC to another. The file format also differs between different platforms (i.e. Mac and Windows); thus, the project file had to be transformed when the user needed to change the platform.

Additionally, an increased level of integration between different packages is necessary. For example, many reference management programmes are starting to offer the facility to integrate with word-processing ones. However, NVivo, as an analysis aid package, does not support full integration with reference management software. It only supports one-way communication, to import references and their bibliographic information at a single point in time. Thus, the researcher was only able to import available references from EndNote to

NVivo at the writing up stage, in order to assign codes to relevant portions of the references for the convenience of referring back to them in the Literature Review or Conclusion. This would have worked much better, had two-way communication been available, to ensure the references added later to EndNote would also be available to NVivo automatically.

4.9 Language

The majority of the interviews were conducted in Arabic, the mother tongue of both the interviewer and the interviewees. Some interviews were conducted in English at the request of the interviewee. Interviewing the participants in Arabic increased the probability that sufficient insight would be gained, by affording participants the comfort and freedom to express their ideas in a form they preferred. However, this decision created some challenges when analysing and interpreting the data in English. One of the key challenges when using a different languages for interview and interpretation is that the meaning informing the concepts expressed in one language might not translate well into another (Van Nes et al, 2010). Those interviews conducted in English posed no such problem.

Furthermore, a challenge arose in reference to interviews conducted in Arabic at the data analysis stage, when a decision needed to be made about whether to interpret the data (particularly when assigning codes and themes) in its original language form, or based on the translated transcripts. To negotiate the challenge, a combined technique was used here, as the original transcripts were prepared in Arabic and the themes and codes prepared in both English and Arabic. The interviews were translated into English excluding digressions. Both

the original Arabic (verbatim) and the translated English text were typed alongside one another when coding the data, to ensure no text would be coded incorrectly.

The translation of the transcripts did not employ an exact literal translation method, and the structure of Arabic phrases differed from that of English ones. Thus, paragraphs, not sentences, were treated as the units of translation. This allowed for better structured translated quotes when restructuring. In most cases, it was sufficient to translate the sentences as they were. A quality check stage was introduced between the coding (which was bilingual) and the discussion phase, by inviting an external auditor to confirm the accuracy of the translation. This editor is a native Arabic speaker who received her PhD from the UK in a Humanities discipline; this ensures she would have sufficient understanding of socially related features of both Arabic and English. . Further confirmation of the transcription and translation of the quotations was performed once they were identified as thematically relevant. Two professionals who are bilingual and fluent in both Arabic and English (both holders of UK postgraduate degrees: an MBA and a PhD in Education) checked both the English and Arabic versions of the text. They were asked to comment on whether the translated English text conveyed the same meaning as the Arabic one, and to suggest modifications possible to the translated text, to enhance its readability in in English without changing the meaning.

As the analysis was thematic, the details of the discourse were not of specific interest to the researcher. The meaning of the quotes relating to themes was more important and this was considered during the translation process. To ensure any translated data was reported accurately, so as to not misrepresent the participants, the process of literal translation was

augmented by sensitive handling of the socio-cultural context. An example of a word that caused some confusion here was “areeq”, which literally means inveterate, although the context and discussion suggest it would be better translated as ‘established’

4.10 Ethical considerations

Research ethics are an integral part of any empirical study (Cohen, et al, 2011, p.76). This section discusses the procedures undertaken to ensure ethical research procedures were upheld. One of the key ethical concerns in any social sciences research is to balance the cost and benefits of the research.

In many cases, social scientists face a conflict between two rights: the right of the scientist to conduct research and contribute to knowledge, and the right of individual research participants to self-determination, privacy, and dignity (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008).

This research did not overlap areas with potential to cause harm to any of the participants or other parties involved in or connected with it. None of the participants were minors (Cohen et al., 2011), and all the students (the youngest group of stakeholders) interviewed had reached the age of maturity, and so were considered adults responsible for their own contributions. The procedures carried out during the research process complied with ethical standards set out by the University of Liverpool as evidenced by the collection of consent and the guarantee of confidentiality. Additionally, as discussed previously in the research aims and objectives section, and subsequently in the section regarding interview questions, the types of

questions posed to participants, and the information solicited from them, were not of a sensitive nature. Indeed, many of the participants extended their permission to the author be quoted by name.

Further details of how privacy and consent were achieved are discussed below.

4.11 Privacy

Researchers typically work under the assumption that research participants wish to maintain their privacy. In compliance with research ethics and standards, the researcher ensured the participants that their privacy would be taken very seriously at all stages of the research process.

An initial discussion was held with the participants informing them what would be involved when participating in the research, and guaranteeing that their views would be upheld and no personal or sensitive information would be collected. This put the interviewees at their ease and encouraged them to discuss their experiences freely.

Privacy was secured for the participants using two vehicles: anonymity by concealing the identity of the participants; and confidentiality, by not sharing personal data (Howe and Moses, 1999). This research ensured all the participants that their identities would be protected and that the information they shared would not be communicated to any individuals or organisations beyond those essential for the study. For increased protection, the softcopy files, including the original recordings and transcripts did not mention the names

of the participants. Pseudonyms were used as an extra layer of protection in case unauthorised access to the files occurred.

4.12 Informed consent

Several elements of informed consent are identified by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008). The first is Competence, requiring the decision to participate in research be made by a responsible and mature individual. This was the case with all the participants of this research. The second is Voluntarism, where the choice to participate in or withdraw from the research lies entirely with the participant. All the participants in this research were informed that their participation would be entirely voluntary. They were also given a copy of the research information sheet, and information to allow them to contact the researcher. There were no instances of a participant withdrawing after agreeing to engage in an interview. The third is Full Information disclosure, requiring a fair explanation of key research objectives, procedures, benefits, potential threats, and extension to participants of the right to ask for further clarification (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008, p.75-5). The informed consent form provided the requisite information to participants. Some participants, especially senior academics, expressed an interest in being informed about the outcomes of the research after its completion.

All the interview data included in this research was collected after the participants had signed forms to register their informed consent, thereby permitting the researcher to record interviews and use the research data. Informed consent guarantees participants have some

control over their participation (Howe and Moses, 1999). There was one instance where an interviewee refused to sign the informed consent form and refused to allow the recording of the interviews. Although he had verbally allowed me to use the discussion, he did not want me to keep the recording. Thus, I decided to omit his interview from the data analysis. Some interviewees stated clearly that they did not mind being mentioned by name in the analysis and presentation of the data. This increased the author's confidence that they felt sufficiently relaxed to express themselves freely; however, in the final thesis no names are given. Anonymity was always maintained, this was because naming only them and not others could have been mistaken by readers as lending higher value or accreditation to some individuals while side-lining others.

The researcher also adjusted the interviews to account for changes in the interviewees' circumstances. It was anticipated, and also witnessed during the interviews, that the interviewees were inclined to be less critical about their current employers. In one case, an interviewee who was outside an HE institute was able to freely express his ideas and critiqued the education system harshly. During the course of the research, he was appointed to a very senior position in the education system, which would no doubt have constrained his expression of his opinions.

With regard to the observation sessions, it was unfeasible to gather signed consent forms from all the students attending the lecture. Therefore, an alternative approach was used. The teacher informed all the students at the beginning of each lecture that I was attending conducting my own research. They were told that none of their personal information would

be disclosed without their consent. In reality, I was not in a position to identify the people attending the lectures. During the informal discussions that occurred, before or after the lectures, I managed to gather informed signed consent from each of the students with whom I spoke. These informal discussions were not recorded and the information gathered was not linked to specific individuals. Thus, all the quotations and opinions presented in the following Findings chapter will be presented as ‘observed student’ without further details added. The general characteristics of the observed group are presented as a single input in the interviewee list.

4.13 Rigour in research

Measures were put in place when conducting this research to ensure it met the requirements for rigour commonly applied in qualitative studies. Symon and Cassell (2012) categorised quality criteria for qualitative management research according three areas: output, process, and performance. The quality of a process is largely concerned with the methodology execution of the research was executed. Key criteria established were: rigour, flexible, responsive, systematic, theoretically informed and reflexive (ibid).

This research adheres to the aforementioned quality criteria. It was flexible in its use of different enquiry techniques and the researcher was open to including different theoretical perspectives in the initial stages. This responsiveness is apparent from the above discussion regarding the development of the analytical template as the research process progressed.

A systematic approach was guaranteed through the application of the same interview guide and analysis process to all the data, and through the selection of research methods that aligned with the research aim and questions. Reflexivity was maintained by acknowledging the author's role as researcher, and while conducting the data collection, interpretation, and analysis process (see page 84).

Chapter Five: Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the interviews and the themes into which the coded data has been classified to answer the research questions below:

RQ1. What are the distinctive characteristics of Saudi Arabian business schools and the Saudi Arabian HE sector?

RQ2. How do a range of key stakeholders view business education and business schools in Saudi Arabia?

- What do stakeholders expect from business schools in Saudi Arabia?
- How do stakeholders use reputation to evaluate business schools and universities in Saudi Arabia?
- What reputational factors have a potential impact on business schools' strategies?

The chapter proceeds as follows, first there is a discussion of a number of considerations relating to how data is presented and reported in this study. Following this, there is a discussion of the different themes emerged from the data. Third, data is presented from each stakeholder group organised according to the four themes set out in the Methodology chapter as the final version of template analysis. The four themes are:

1. Context specific aspects;
2. ‘Reputation as Being Known’, ‘Generalised Favourability’;
3. ‘Reputation as Being Known for Something’; the three university missions; and
4. ‘Reputation as Being Known for Something’; beyond the three missions.

Fourthly, there is an analysis of the presented data, highlighting similarities and differences between stakeholders in preparation for the Discussion and Conclusions chapters. Finally, some reflection on the challenges to business schools and universities in Saudi Arabia are offered in relation to the data collected and analysed in this study.

5.2 Reporting of qualitative data

As indicated in the Methodology chapter, the majority of the interviews were conducted in Arabic. The quotations employed in this chapter are either presented in the original language (i.e. if the interview took place in English), or an English translation if the original was in Arabic. As the original language of the quotations is not significant to either the discussion or the interpretation in this research, it is not identified in every instance. As previously discussed in the Methodology chapter (see p. 115), all of the quotations employed have been re-checked to ensure they accurately reflect the original meaning, and that the translation is as close as possible to the intention behind the original words.

This research employed semi-structured interviews, which enabled the interviewees to speak for the majority of the time available, as well as to discuss a number of related topics in the interview guide. In some cases, the interviewer made lesser use of questions or comments to

direct the interviewee to the required topic as issues arose naturally; these are therefore discussed when reporting the data without any input from the interviewer. In contrast, there were a number of instances in which the input from the interviewees was in response to a direct question or comment from the interviewer. In these cases, both the interviewer and interviewee are quoted, in order to demonstrate the context in which the answers took place.

In a number of cases, where a quotation is linked to a previous discussion, and the interviewee simply refers to the subject without explanation, the topic of the discussion is inserted in square brackets to provide the frame of reference and maintain the accuracy of the quotations. When the quotation is incomplete (i.e. some words are absent) three dots (i.e. ...) are used to indicate word removal. Words referring to interruptions during phone calls, or conversation that is irrelevant, have also been removed, and when the interviewee paused for some time before resuming the conversation, two dots (..) are used to indicate a pause.

A number of quotations were considered relevant to more than one aspect. As previously discussed in the methodology, parallel coding is a feature of template analysis (King, 2012), leading to phrases frequently being given more than one code. Hence, the reporting focussed on avoiding repeating quotations, while attempting to limit each quotation to the relevant item and context. Lengthy quotations (i.e. over three lines) are repeated on only a small number of occasions.

5.3 Background information relevant to the findings

5.3.1 Ministry of Higher Education

The merger between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of HE took place (as noted above in the literature review) in January 2015, i.e. during the period of this research, but following the completion of all the interviews during the initial analysis phase. At the time of finalising this thesis, the effects from the merger had not yet been observed. The researcher paid close attention to any indications of the impact from the merger, to assess whether there was a requirement to deviate from the research aims. Hence, during the presentation and discussion of the findings, the entity under discussion is referred to as ‘the Ministry of HE’, ‘the Ministry of Education’, or simply as ‘the Ministry’, in order to reflect the terms employed during the interviews. This aims to acknowledge the context in which the discussion took place.

5.3.2 University and Business Schools

There is also, similar to references to ‘The Ministry’, an interchangeable use of ‘business schools’ and ‘university’. During the interviews, many answers referred in an interchangeable manner to business schools, and the university context to which they belonged. The questions and interview guide referred solely to business schools as this was the aim of the thesis and its research questions, while follow up questions focussed primarily on the context of the discussion; i.e. either on business schools or university.

The reporting of interview data thus employs the terms used by the interviewees, i.e. either ‘university’, or ‘business school’. Further discussion and interpretation of this overlapping of terms, and the referring of one meaning to another, follows in the Discussion chapter.

5.4 Overview of Themes

The following sections present an overview of each theme derived from the data. This overview sets out the template used when presenting each stakeholder group’s views in the following section.

5.4.1 Theme One: Context specific attributes

This theme reflects the research findings relating to the specific context of Saudi Arabia. As discussed in the literature review, the differences between Saudi Arabia and countries such as the UK and the US influenced the answers to the research questions. A key objective of this research was to enrich the literature about business schools in Saudi Arabia, which was done by investigating both the differences and similarities, as discussed in the literature, between Saudi Arabia and other countries (i.e. the UK and the US). The discussion during the interviews focused on the distinguishing features of Saudi Arabia as not limited to topics bearing a direct relationship to business schools, but extending to other social, economic, and political factors considered to have an influence on universities in general, and business schools in particular. The discussion and reporting of attributes differentiating the Saudi Arabian context demonstrates the rationale of the current research, and provides further

justification for the need for contextual sensitivity when addressing the reputation of business schools.

In this theme, the various aspects of the Saudi context are organised into two main categories: (1) those with an indirect relationship to HE (e.g. local culture; the role of religion; gender issues; and the relationship with society); and (2) those with a direct relationship to HE (e.g. the role and funding of HE and the governance of universities).

It is important to note that aspects related to the context, and those discussed later in this thesis, are not mutually exclusive, and a number are represented in more than one place, i.e. the relationship between universities and society is discussed both in the rationale for the context and in the second dimension of reputation: ‘Being Known for Something’, under the three missions of universities. This chapter highlights only the reference to the local context and how it differs from other contexts. However, the discussion later focuses on the attribute itself and its contribution to reputation as an aspect of the mission of universities.

5.4.2 Theme Two: Reputation as ‘Generalised Favourability’ or ‘Being Generally known’

As noted in the literature review, there are a number of different dimensions to reputation; i.e. ‘Being Known’, and ‘Being Known for Something’, and ‘Generalised Favourability’ (Lange et al., 2011). Being Known is generalised, and lacks any reference to specific aspects concerning the reputation of an organisation. Being Known thus shares with the dimension of Generalised Favourability the feature of non-specificity, although they differ in relation to the

evaluation factor. Generalised Favourability can include judgmental factors, while Being Known is (as discussed previously in the literature review) primarily non evaluative (Lange et al., 2011). As discussed earlier in the Literature Review chapter and table 7 below.

	Being Known	Generalised Favourability	Being Known for Something
Reputation attribute	Non-specific	Non-Specific	Specific
Stakeholder's Judgment	Non-judgmental	Judgmental	Judgmental

Table 7 Comparison of reputation dimensions

This theme focuses on the non-specific form of reputation (Lange et al., 2011) containing both the dimension of the reputation of (1) Being Known, and (2) Generalised Favourability. The interviewees referred to their preference for one university, discipline, or area, without detailing the reasons for their preference. In some cases, the same interviewee later gave details, or noted specific factors, which could be classified as choice and preference, thus ensuring this aspect is classified under the dimension, Being Known for Something. This theme focuses on the fact that there are a number of instances in which non-specific choices are made. The findings regarding this theme are classified under aspects including: comparison, ranking, and accreditation because they are non-judgmental from stakeholders' perspectives, but are dependent on external judgment. It is important to note that comparison is embedded in most attributes across all themes, but this theme concerns when comparison between universities or business schools occurs, without specifying a basis for this comparison or if comparison is based on an external measures such as ranking and accreditation.

5.4.2 Theme three: Reputation as ‘Being Known for Something’ in the light of the three missions

This theme focuses on the reputation construct and the discussion created primarily in the dimension of Being Known for Something (Lange et al., 2011). In contrast to the aspects of Being Known and Generalised Favourability discussed in the previous theme, both the current, and the following theme discuss aspects related to Being Known for Something. This dimension focuses on describable phenomena, and refers to areas in which they may be measurable or tangible, although it should be noted that in this research, the concepts of measurability and tangibility can prove problematic because of its qualitative nature. For better organisation of the Being Known for Something dimension of reputation, the presentation of the research findings builds on the three missions of universities discussed in the literature review under one theme (i.e. teaching, research, and social engagement). It adds further items beyond the three missions, but which were mentioned by the interviewees as indicators of quality, e.g. administrative activities, admission, and the use of technology. These items were grouped under the next theme as Being Known for Something beyond the three missions of the university.

5.4.3 Theme Four: Reputation as ‘Being Known for Something’ beyond the three missions

The aspect of Being Known for Something is not limited to the three missions of the university. The discussion included further areas (e.g. administrative and non-academic functions) impacting on the choice of universities and business schools. These areas were

seen as quality indicators, and in a number of cases made a significant contribution to the choices made by stakeholders to either deal with, or avoid dealing with, a specific business school or university.

5.5 Stakeholders' view of business schools

The following sections present the aspects discussed by stakeholders during the interviews, with findings arranged by stakeholder group. Within each stakeholder group, the findings are grouped into the four themes, as noted above. This is followed by an analysis of the similarities and differences assessed in preparation for the following discussions chapter.

5.5.1 Policy Makers

As outlined in the Methodology chapter, Ministry officials are classified as policy makers playing a key role in formulating policies in Saudi Arabian HE. Their views have an additional value, as they portray unwritten opinions about the future direction of HE in Saudi Arabia, as expressed by key players. This stakeholder group comprises advisors to the Minister, senior consultants at the ministry and a business school's Dean.

5.5.1.1 Theme one: Context specific attributes

A number of aspects discussed by this stakeholder group directly related to the Saudi Arabian context, in particular: culture, the role of HE, governance, funding, reference to social sciences, the educational mission, private HE, and developments in HE. These are detailed below.

Culture is a cornerstone in distinguishing the Saudi Arabian context, and was extensively discussed by one policy maker, who was a Dean at a business school. It was discussed as an attribute framing the relationship between universities and society. He referred to both institutional and societal culture, obstructing the move towards increased engagement between universities and society.

We have challenges in the implementation [of engagement with society] in many ways. Some of them [are related to the fact] that you have an institution that has a culture that is really isolated and not connected to the outside world, and now you are asking the institution to change this culture. As we know, changing culture is always difficult. Another thing is that you don't have a tradition of engagement with the community. [SA2]

However, this acknowledgment of culture as a challenge indicates that engagement with society is seen as an important function of business schools and universities, as the interviewee was highlighting the main constraints of such engagement. At the same time, he also highlighted 'cultural view' as resulting in business and management disciplines being given a lower status than science related disciplines. He offered a number of solutions, including attracting the best students, followed by facilitating offers of suitable employment.

Here in Saudi Arabia we stereotype majors and fields [main subject of study]. Also, what was prestigious for some periods of time is not prestigious at others. But there is a great improvement. Business administration was previously regarded in the same way as Literature [Humanities], but now there is a development. [SA2]

However, this cultural stereotyping is not limited to the aspects of society, as noted by the policy makers, who indicated that Business and Management are viewed as aspects of the Humanities, which experience a greater number of restrictions in the context of university admission. The consequence of perceiving business schools as part of the Humanities is the

automatic assumption that it is of lower status, and therefore suitable for less competent students.

He also noted that (due to the classification discussed above) management studies were viewed as if they belonged to the ‘Humanities’ side of high school classification. He stated:

Business administration was looked at as something, such as Humanities, but now there is a development. [SA2]

He was referring here to the fact that his AACSB accredited business school has an admissions policy that only accepts high school students from the ‘science’ pathway.

The role of HE in Saudi Arabia was (in a similar manner to the issue of culture) formerly discussed as a distinguishing characteristic of its context. The same interviewee, who had observed the development of HE prior to achieving a decision making role as Dean of a business school, described the role of HE in Saudi Arabia (which he claimed, differed from that in other countries) as focussing primarily on producing qualified human resources to participate in the country’s development. He emphasised that the priorities of universities were liable to change over time, stating that this was currently apparent in Saudi Arabia, where the sole role of a university was to educate students to fill the gap in the labour market and answer the need for local employees in all areas:

If you think about the beginnings of King Saud University, the beginning of KFUPM involved around sixty students. This is not a lot. Universities were too busy in the education role, preparing the cadre for the nation. Other things were not important. Even globally, it was there but not with this momentum. From the early nineties, I think, we started to acknowledge the different roles of the university. [SA2]

Thus, he considered that the key motive for establishing universities in Saudi Arabia was to produce qualified citizens, in particular to fulfil the rapid increase in demand for human resources. This observation appears both logical and legitimate.

However, as he acknowledged, this motivation appears to have changed recently, as universities have become more mature and well established, leading to the interviewee subsequently highlighting existing confusion, both within the universities themselves, and the government, concerning the role of universities among policy makers. This confusion has arisen from the tension between the role of universities in seeking to resolve unemployment issues and to enhance teaching and knowledge, while at the same time engaging in social and cultural change.

As long as the Ministry of Labour are working on the same project, that means we all work on the same project and the market can accept that everyone is working this way... In the labour market, the [Ministry of Labour focus] will be on Saudisation, Localisation and things like that... But here [in universities], you want [to know], what are the qualifications? What are the positions? Then it comes back to your strategy.

As a Ministry of Education [expanding the previous sentence to speak on behalf of the Ministry as well], we cannot diverge from our policy and strategy.

We as the education sector do not care about politics, but we do care about facts.

What are the qualifications, what are the numbers? Then, you want to fill [vacant positions] from SA from Waq al Waq [a term used in local dialogue to refer to a location at a great distance], it is another issue. This is another policy. But the information, you need the information. [SA2]

The acknowledgment of this tension signifies an improvement in the representation of the role and priorities of HE. The distribution of responsibilities between universities and further governmental bodies also acknowledges the potentially significant role of universities. The

reference to whether employment is local or not might be understood as avoidance and an unwillingness to interfere in what he assumed to be the Ministry of Labour's responsibility, but at the same time a call for more attention from universities to fulfil their original duties, teaching in this case.

In terms of context specific attributes, the role of the Ministry (as discussed previously in the literature review) is vital. The interviewees' references to the Ministry revealed their perception of its role and its degree of control. A senior consultant in the Ministry stated that universities are accorded sufficient freedom to make their own decisions. He viewed control as a tool to ensure quality, arguing that it maintained the minimum requirements of quality and ensured certain deliverable targets were met. In commenting on a demand from some quarters for greater independence for universities he stated that their request was invalid, aggressively critiquing the campaign by some academics to grant universities greater autonomy and decision-making powers:

Some people say they can't do anything because of the Ministry. Well, they can. There are systems and procedures that they need to follow. I don't know what they want, or what they are looking for, by asking for universities' independence: What do they need? All requirements are fulfilled by the Ministry, and we are also open to discussing any development plans they may have. [SA4.2]

This viewpoint is significant to understanding the tensions present in the relationship between the Ministry and the universities, including the way each side views these tensions.

A further issue highlighted in the discussion of the relationship between the Ministry of HE and universities is one of trust. Interviews with both senior officials in the Ministry and

senior academics in business schools revealed that the Ministry's trust delivers a number of privileges, including exemptions from rules/policies, and denotes a preference when allocating consultancy projects. An interviewee in this policy makers group, working as a Dean for an AACSB accredited business school, referred to the relationship between the Ministry and his university, and the delegation of some projects, as follows:

The university is trusted by the Ministry in some areas. For example, the Ministry wants to have an academic leadership centre in universities. It is the Ministry's [centre], but who will run it for five years until it establishes itself and becomes independent? We will! They [the institution in question] can. They even procured a plot of land in Riyadh, and started to build the building [work is ongoing]. [SA2]

TA further interviewee also refers to the Ministry's trust of a number of universities and their subsequent exemption from a number of policies, saying:

Of course they [the Ministry] gave it special treatment, especially with the number of admissions during issues with admission. So it kept some of its seriousness and quality. [SA4.2]

On one side, this can be a positive for the trusted universities, enabling them to maintain a certain level of quality. However, it represents an extra layer of challenge to other universities wishing to gain the trust and enjoy preferential treatment.

Similarly, funding is a subject closely related to the relationship between universities and the Ministry of Education. Public universities are fully funded by the Ministry (MOE, 2015c), and a number of initiatives exist that are currently reducing university dependence on government funds. A policy maker at a university that has already initiated its own endowment project stated:

There is an issue; the government is not creating any shortages, there is no doubt. It is generous in funding HE, but the national budget is speculative. It is subject to change. That's why we had the idea of building endowment projects, so that when you have problems with a budget, you have something, so that the essentials don't get affected. [SA2]

The endowment initiative itself remains ambiguous in nature, and the information disclosed by the universities involved contain minimum detail. Indeed, the author has previously noted in an unpublished conference paper that there is a weakness in communication concerning endowment projects (Alharthi, 2014a).

Financial support from the government is not limited to public universities. One interviewee revealed that private universities are in a position to apply for government loans, which are interest free and repayable over twenty years. An academic commenting on funding in private HE stated that some investors would prefer the government to be the primary source of funding for universities, as investors are unwilling to provide the majority of the funding:

Some people only want the loan money without investing more. [SA4.1]

He also added that support for private HE also takes the form of sponsorship, with the government contributing up to 100% of the tuition fees of high achieving students following specific medical courses, and 50% of the tuition fees for high achieving students in a number of other disciplines.

The government gives loans of 50 and 65 million Saudi Riyals. These are long term loans with relaxed conditions and without any profits. So the government is supporting private HE, and it also provides sponsorship to good students, up 100% for some and 50% for others. [SA4.1]

A further senior academic, with experience of both private and public universities, viewed the funding model negatively, arguing that the existing model enabled the Ministry to play a ‘dictatorial’ role in controlling universities and HE:

If the Ministry is funding, they cannot be independent. [SA2]

There are no details available concerning the allocation of funds to different disciplines within each university, and there is also insufficient disclosure regarding the allocation of funds from the Ministry or universities. This issue is beyond the scope of this research, and therefore no investigation was undertaken, particularly as allocation of funds is considered an internal decision by the university. However, one interviewee noted that the funding of the universities is based on a number of factors, including, the number of students, the need for infrastructure and to support research.

A senior expatriate academic working in the Ministry evaluated the varying impact of differences in HE funding on the operation of universities; arguing that government funding allows senior personnel to concentrate on developing the universities, rather than focussing on securing funding exclusively:

To be a [university] President is to bring millions and millions, hundreds of millions of dollars, build buildings, campuses, sell out research. Here, the rectors, vice rectors, and Deans, they don’t have to do that. They are able to use their time to focus on quality of education and the quality of instruction, developing professors, developing programmes. They don’t have to spend a huge amount of time [on raising money]. [SA5]

The interviewee also acknowledged that time is taken up in negotiating appropriate funding with the Ministry, but stated that this is less time consuming and requires less effort than seeking further sources of funding:

They do have to request the appropriate amount of money and talk to the appropriate people in Ministry, and they don't have to crack down on those activities. So that is a real plus. [SA5]

It is important to understand the reference to funding for universities in order to establish the context in which universities operate in Saudi Arabia.

However, it is also important in the Saudi Arabian context to acknowledge the ongoing development of HE. This was discussed with two interviewees in this stakeholder group.

Firstly, a consultant in the Ministry, who expressed concerns relating to the relative lack of development activities:

There is some validity in their concern [the media]. It is not possible to solve all these problems [associated with HE: lower quality, mismatch with market needs]. You cannot do everything at once [and say] this is where the value is. You need to look at it from the big picture for years. You don't expect these changes to happen rapidly. What happens is they don't see [the] whole [picture]; they aren't really coming from the heart. Effectiveness takes time to achieve. As I previously said, the quality of education that we are building is not like instant Nescafe - just add water and... It doesn't happen that way, it takes days and days... like a woman having a baby, it's going to take nine months... The timing is very important. So we are to be vigilant and ensure that appropriate time is taken to add the quality in, but we are not to take too long because this is frustrating as well. So we need the right amount of timing and patience to build it right and put it in place effectively. [SA5]

He also added that bureaucracy represents one of the most significant challenges in relation to development. A consultant at the Ministry of HE stated:

I think one of the major concerns was knowledge, and we are trying to improve that, but some people are claiming that one of the concerns is the bureaucratic system and that the hierarchy of authority is still putting in many boundaries and putting a lot of restrictions on universities to move around and make their own decisions. [Universities need to ask themselves] Do you see this as a valid constraint or is it just overrated? [SA5]

The national development plan for HE was developed by a single university, in coordination with the Ministry. It takes the form of a twenty-five year strategic plan, and was approved by the King in 2011 (MOE, 2015a). Only a single interviewee (who worked in the university in which the plan had been initiated) discussed the AAFAQ (the national development plan for HE). He referred to the plan as a university initiative able to contribute to wider society. He observed that the plan was:

First initiated by the university, and approved by the King. [SA2]

When questioned about the progress of the plan, and the lack of reporting about it in the media after it was made public, he replied:

Always in strategies, no one comes and says “these are the tasks that we have achieved”. But you, when you look from the beginning to the end, you will find many of the things in the plan are already in the minds of decision makers. It’s not only this. Now when any university makes a plan, it has to provide its affiliation with AAFAQ as part of its documentation, because many tasks in AAFAQ should be executed by universities, and not by the Ministry. The Ministry is not involved. In fact, many things [developments] that happened occurred in AAFAQ or were guided by AAFAQ [and], AAFAQ has a big administration now. [SA2]

Further to developments taking place at university level, there are also some activities taking place at country level. As noted in the literature review, a key feature of HE development in Saudi Arabia, since 2000, has been the expansion of its educational mission whereby students

are fully sponsored to study in world leading universities at different levels of education. An interviewee from the policy makers' group, who is a business school Dean, discussed the education mission programme relative to two dimensions, one of which was related to the fact that local universities are comparable to world-class universities, as evidenced by their students being recognised as sufficiently competent when seeking admission to the latter.

Now, the quality of our students is shown by our students who are studying abroad. Some universities in the US accept our students straight away, they don't have any issues with them. [SA2]

He also noted that graduates from the education mission programme add diversity to the qualified work force, as they might have different perspectives on business challenges, although their integration also poses a number of challenges.

At present, developments in HE also include the introduction of private HE institutes. The interviewees from the Ministry noted that private HE introduction provided the necessary solution to the shortage of places in public universities. They classified private HE institutions as either for-profit or non-profit. The interviewees in the policy makers group working as part of the Ministry's research team were most critical of for-profit institutions, due to the potential conflict of interest that arises between their role in providing 'quality' education, and that of satisfying investors' requirements for a return on investment.

Some people need a short period to invest their money and get a return quickly. It is not logical to target return on investment in five years. [SA4.1]

They referred to the Ministry's financial support for private HE, however they also pointed to the absence of an academic support scheme from the Ministry, despite that being a

requirement of private institutes. They also noted that the Ministry's involvement primarily consists of assessing and approving academic programmes. The support scheme is therefore viewed as beneficial and might therefore be considered in future.

Interviewer: Does it [the Ministry] support them on the academic side, for example, staff? Do they allow staff in government universities to be with private ones or not?

Interviewee: Until now, no. This is one of the requirements they wanted. They said, "why don't we allow teaching staff in public universities to come and teach for some hours?" This is still not allowed. So, they sometimes go to employees in companies who don't have a PhD in some disciplines. But the Ministry is chasing them for that. [SA4.1]

One interviewee acknowledged there are a number of challenges involved when recruiting staff for private HE institutions. The Ministry attempts to ensure all members of staff are qualified by setting out conditions, and therefore many candidates are rejected. Little clarity exists concerning the recruitment process, however, it is beyond the scope of this current research to discuss this issue in greater depth.

They have difficulties in bringing staff from abroad. Sometimes, they have graduated from universities in developing countries. The Ministry stopped this. We asked to be able to recruit reasonably qualified staff. Not, for example, from a university in [X-country] that was only established two years ago. [SA4.1]

The interviewee also noted that staff should be employed on a full time basis, as many private institutes benefit from employing qualified academics who work in other organisations on a part-time basis. He acknowledged that this appears to be reasonable, but added such an approach has not yet been approved. He further added that private institutions represent an alternative approach for some students who have to date been unable to score sufficient

marks to enrol in public universities (e.g. for Medicine). He also noted that parents were able to overcome the limited number of available university places by taking advantage of private alternatives, adding that this option is not generally considered, but that it is available:

If I am an excellent student, but there are only 400 places available, who do we take and who do we reject? Also, if a parent is financially capable and thinks his son is good, so education should give substantial alternatives. Even those with 60% could get an opportunity. [SA4.2]

discussion also took place concerning the disciplines available in private HE, revealing that these primarily occur in two areas; i.e. medicine and business. The interviewee argued that although private HE institutions should investigate the provision of other fields of study, they were uninterested in doing so, due to a lack of profitability:

They [private HEs] target specific fields, like business, IT, and medical support. You won't find departments like Mathematics, Social Science, and History. You won't find unfamiliar departments. [SA4.1]

In general, private HE was portrayed as of a lower quality than noted in the public universities in particular (as noted by a senior academic) when it came to for-profit institutes:

I believe there are two dominant directions, the charitable and I think this is better... The teaching staff are also better... This is a simple rule, but I think it is mostly valid. Charitable institutions are better than for-profit private universities. [SA4.3]

5.5.1.2 Theme Two: Reputation as 'Generalised Favourability' or 'Being Generally known'

The following section discusses the findings of policy makers' groups, as mapped to the first dimension of reputation, i.e. 'Being Known', as laid out in the literature review and the final

form of analysis template in the methodology with regard to business schools in Saudi Arabia.

The most salient attribute in this theme is comparison; indeed, an interviewee from the Ministry, who is a senior consultant, compared the area of study in business schools with that in other areas (e.g. medicine and engineering), arguing that the latter are deemed more important:

The increase in the number of management courses and management scholarships in private education will create a disaster in a few years, with too many graduates lacking sufficient opportunities [for work]. For example, some students from medicine are transferring [changing their area of study whilst studying] to management, and some from engineering. [SA4.1]

In his comparison, he suggests a move from medicine and engineering to management represents a demotion of status. He expresses an explicit warning concerning the increasing number of management graduates (emphasising the impression that such an increase is likely to result in disaster). The participant further explained his views subsequently at the interview stage, relating them to the danger that there is likely to be a decrease in employment opportunities. He was, however, non-specific:

Lack of employment opportunities often makes it difficult. It's like a wave. All the people who went to Engineering were heading towards Civil Engineering; after twenty years it became [more popular to choose] Dental Medicine. [SA4.1]

This statement proceeds from the view that the purpose of a degree is to ensure one's future employment. This reflects the expectations stakeholders place upon universities.

The importance of different attributes of university programmes was also reflected in interviews with policy-makers working as consultants at the Ministry. They expressed differing opinions about university ranking mechanisms, considering them to be beyond the scope of considerations made by the Ministry. One stated:

We don't do studies to compare between our universities, we don't believe in that [ranking]. You might find something in international ranking, but even so, it's not very useful, because they [rankings] mainly concentrate on research that might not be appropriate for us. [SA4.2]

Similarly, when invalidating rankings, a second interviewee from the same stakeholder group (i.e. policy makers) noted one university's lack of response to rankings, explaining:

If we went through that debate, leave the ranking, it is a measurement. If you have Science, or Medicine, you will get a higher ranking by default. The discussion concerns claims based on the ranking. When you want to talk now, in the middle of all those not very credible messages, you will have problems. That's why we were avoiding it, but another part is that we also lacked skills in communication. [SA2]

He was more specific when elucidating his view that ranking is of less significance in Saudi Arabia than in other countries like the US and the UK, noting that ranking is associated with a number of issues: firstly, despite having gained publicity only recently, this system is not new, and associated publicity has led to assumptions concerning the position of a university without any consideration of ranking criteria. Secondly, that the criteria itself could prove potentially misleading. He referred to the range of subjects offered by the university as a means of improving the ranking measurement tools. Thirdly, he acknowledged the lack of effective communication between universities and the wider community.

Accreditation is typically coupled with rankings. An academic critiquing the recent spike of interest in ranking and accreditation by the media admitted the importance of being accredited:

There is no doubt that, in a country like Saudi Arabia, it helps a lot to be accredited. [SA2]

His discussion identified the importance of ranking as primarily associated with social expectations, with decisions assumed to be impacted by university rankings, or ranking measures that are viewed as sufficiently authentic to form an evaluation of a university or a business school.

Further to discussions about ranking and accreditation, the discussion about university age emerged in this stakeholder groups as a comparative element concerning universities outside the country. An interviewee and senior consultant in the ministry critiqued the potential presence of lower quality academics in the university setting, referring to the age of the university from which they had graduated.

Not, for example, from a university in [country name removed] that was only established two years ago. There are many issues. Quality is one of them. [SA4.1]

There is a clear assumption that newer universities are of lower academic quality, and that this is reflected in their graduates.

The attributes presented above are all classified as Being Generally known, or associated with the Generalised Favourability dimension of reputation, where reputation and stakeholder

preference is not specific to an activity or function, nor is it based on an external judgment such as accreditation and ranking.

5.5.1.3 Theme three: Reputation as ‘Being Known for Something’ in the light of the three missions

The second of the dimensions of reputation employed in this research (as set out in the literature review) concerns ‘Being Known for Something’. This dimension is classified in this research into two groups: the first informed by the three missions of universities (as previously discussed), and the second covering aspects not falling directly within these three missions. This section examines what has been said by the interviewees in the policy maker stakeholder groups in relation to each of the three missions of universities.

5.5.1.3.1 Research

The first mission presented concerns the research role of universities. A university is a designated research institute, and participates in multiple research projects across the country. One division associated with the research institute relates to business and management studies. It was noted that (in comparison with other divisions, i.e. Engineering) there was no clear statement of project achievement in relation to management and business related research.² When a policy maker interviewee from the same university was asked to comment on this, he noted:

² The comparison in research activity was through published information in the research center website. It is not referenced here to ensure anonymity of interviewee as it is clear he works at the same university.

Right, it is actually [because] that division is not active. [SA2]

e gave no further explanation or justification for this inactivity. However, when commenting on a related topic, another interviewee (a consultant at the ministry) observed the discrepancy in number of research studies as follows:

Look, I linked this discussion with other things, because when you see the level of PhDs, for example in Medicine and Engineering, they are producing much more research. Let's go back to the 1980s and look for the input, and see who was admitted to universities. The best went into Medicine and Engineering, and the rest were distributed among other departments. Those with good publications are the good students. It is a chain, as you take the best in these two disciplines. It is normal to witness better research from them, too. [SA4.2]

He therefore held strong opinions regarding which individuals are capable of producing more effective research, believing, in this case, that lower level students choose to study Business and Management rather than to Medicine and Engineering. This was seen as explaining the significant variation in research outcomes. This view is supported by the SCImago Journal and Country Rank (2016), which revealed Saudi Arabia has only 146 refereed journal academic publications in Business and Management, although in 2013 it had 2,655 and 2,922 respectively in Engineering and Medicine.

There is a notable shortage of studies in Saudi Arabia focussing on the effectiveness of HE. This deficit is acknowledged by those with the best access to, and closest involvement with, research in the domain of HE. A consultant in HE research at the Ministry commented on the value and practicality of the materials studied in the university:

We didn't do any studies, but used our knowledge and [those] people we talked to. [SA4.1]

His comments can be used as evidence to explain the lack of research in this area, as he works in a location in which research should take place, and where researchers can seek relevant data. This is also confirmed by another interviewee who is also a policy maker and consultant at the Ministry, and who refers to employers' preferences for graduates from specific universities or disciplines:

We don't have studies, only our opinions. [SA4.3]

his quotation highlights the lack of any formal assessment explaining the differences between universities. A further interviewee from the same consulting group intervened to explain the employability of graduates at specific colleges, regardless of their majors:

I have two examples. I taught students at the agriculture college; they graduated and are now considered among the best bank employees. We provided them with basic skills: facing the public and dealing with difficulties. I do not favour Agriculture students; all graduates are facing the same fate. It is not necessarily [the case that] those who study Medicine go into medicine [-related jobs] or those who studied Engineering go into an engineering company... Perhaps in Medicine [the jobs] are closest to the subjects they studied, because there is a severe shortage of clinicians. But, when it comes to Agriculture, History and Media, people [who studied these] are now working in (for example) banks, and are very efficient. Banks give them a six-month financial course, following which and they are able to work... The university gave them the skills and the desire to learn, which enables them to work anywhere, except in a very specialised field. [SA4.3]

His assumptions were based on personal judgment and informal data gathered from his colleagues, and peers in the relevant sector, i.e. banking. There remains a lack of research, or any supporting study, empirically proving this claim.

5.5.1.3.2 Teaching and teaching methods

Teaching formed the second (and most frequently discussed) aspect concerning the mission of a university. This section discusses the findings from the policy makers group concerning teaching and related topics. An interviewee, whose role is to advise the deputy Minister of Education based on experience with business and management education referred to the available teaching materials, while arguing that Business and Management programmes are not attractive options for students, as is the case in both the UK and US. His discussion included the prevalence of out of date teaching materials, which he viewed as contributing to the negative image present in business disciplines:

So I say, don't say that marketing is good or not, [but ask] from where a student has graduated. I say that marketing is a great science, but how it is taught in the Arab world causes it to lose its value. The newest textbook, is ten years old. [SA3]

A further policy maker interviewee, a Dean at an AACSB accredited business school, highlighted developments and improvements in teaching methods. He discussed the use of the case study approach (i.e. the development of local case studies with leading consulting houses) as advancing the teaching methods employed by the business school:

We have already moved to the case study approach in our teaching. It has made a strong impression on students, their way of thinking, and the skills they develop... It depends on the nature of the course, some cases are local, some are international. We have a relationship with [consulting company name] house, Earnest and Young, and sometimes they have cases we can use because there is some cooperation between us. But we also have a project to develop local cases. [SA2]

The use of local case studies indicates a shift in the relationship between business schools and their surrounding environment, also indicating less dependence on fully imported teaching materials.

The effectiveness of university teaching was viewed as going beyond teaching using academic materials. In many cases, the skills acquired by students at university were perceived as similar, if not preferable to academic knowledge. A policy maker who worked in an AACSB accredited business school in Saudi Arabia, and who had been appointed to an advisory role in the Ministry, referred to ‘skills’ as the source of the competitive advantage of graduates of the institution for which he had previously worked, over those from other universities. When asked about whether other universities consider the dimension of skills in their programmes, he noted:

They need time. Maybe they have the desire. I am not very involved in business schools, but from what I hear, they have the desire, but there is a difference between the desire and the application. [SA3]

Furthermore, there are more specific attributes in teaching that demand further classification as outlined in the coming pages.

A key aspect to mention here is the challenging teaching environment, the same interviewee as that quoted above discussed his experiences of the private business school environment:

When I was in [X-University] we had two routes for marketing, Arabic and English. The first decision I made before they started was to remove this. Don't give the student the choice. If they have the chance, they will choose Arabic, and English will gradually be lost. We give them an intensive language programme and encourage them to attend external English

courses. If we stick to teaching them English, they will not have a problem. They will learn. [SA3]

Thus, the removal of the easier option was viewed as a means of improving the quality of the school's outcomes.

Concern over the use of Arabic or English as a medium of instruction was clearly present during the discussions, in particular in those relating to teaching methods. English was, in considered the superior choice in discussions. This was confirmed by the same interviewee, who had worked previously as a Marketing lecturer, emphasising the importance of English materials, while criticising Arabic materials, as his preference for English materials was due to the low quality of the Arabic materials available. He commented on his own experience of reading in Arabic:

Now, I am reading a translated book on Marketing and I don't understand it. I am confused, although I know the concepts. So, how do you think it would be for someone who doesn't know the concepts beforehand? I feel sympathy for those students. [SA3]

However, a consultant in the Ministry of HE, who did not speak Arabic, and whose first language was English, emphasised the importance of considering both languages, as follows:

I think the best thing is to be bilingual. It is not effective to only use Arabic, because English dominates the literature, research and textbooks. Students need to be given the cutting edge of knowledge with the best available information... that is all in English. I do think that Arabic is essential as well, and that the quality of a degree lies in how students apply what they learn and [how they] use resources in the Arabic community. The use of Arabic is dominant in many venues in Saudi Arabia. They therefore need to understand it and transfer it to meaningful Arabic applications. [SA5]

There was a clear preference for English when the policy maker (see SA3 quotation, above) discussed allowing the option of using both languages. A second policy maker critiqued the approach used in a neighbouring country that enforces the use of English in all modules, as follows:

Can you imagine, the subjects of Arabic literacy and religion are taught in English? This is weird and not acceptable. [SA4.1]

His comment does not suggest that Arabic would be an improved medium for teaching, as he supported the view that English is more effective; however, he criticised schools employing English to teach subjects inherently tied to Arabic.

A further learning approach for universities in Saudi Arabia (as discussed previously in the literature review) is to offer a preparatory year. An interviewee in the policy makers group viewed this year as creating added value for business and management and social science students, due to staff reporting a higher standard among students following the introduction of such a preparatory year in their universities. However, he also referred to references to the preparatory year as being non-beneficial to Engineering and Medical students, describing it as a waste of time and effort. He referred to the fact that universities were already attracting good students, who were in no need of any further preparation.

Well there is a debate, there is no official measure. We have an idea of such a study. Do we continue or discard the prep year? But, in general, some people are for, and some are against. For example, some academics in KSU business schools believe it is wonderful, while some in other colleges believe it doesn't add anything. [SA4.2]

An interviewee in a university delivering an exemplary preparatory year (as referred to by other interviewees) commented from a different perspective. He first stressed that his university had taught all the universities in the country about how to implement the preparatory year. He argued that their application might not have assisted them in realising the same standard, and even that it may have resulted in negative, rather than positive, effects.

When discussing teaching on preparatory course, the teacher states that it forms a cornerstone for how students comprehend the teaching and learning process. However, teachers on such courses are not always viewed in a positive manner. The interviewees from the policy makers group also commented on the role of the teacher of such courses, and only one negative viewpoint was expressed. This focussed on graduates from developing countries who had been recruited by private HE institutions, this development was regarded as reducing the quality of teaching:

They have difficulties when bringing them from abroad. Sometimes, they are graduates from universities in developing countries. The Ministry stopped them. [SA4.1]

The issue of the practitioner teacher was also discussed in detail with a number of stakeholder groups. A policy maker interviewee, who, at the time of the interview, was working as Dean of a business school, referred to practitioner teachers as representing one of his school's competitive advantages and as key to ensuring teaching excellence. His institution already employed a number of teachers who balanced working in the domain of industry with part-time teaching, while others had previous experience of industry prior to moving into

academia. He acknowledged that students preferred teachers with these kinds of backgrounds, as this promoted students' understanding:

We now have another approach, which we call co-teaching; we made it possible for people from industry to come and give students two, three or sometimes even more, lectures from the course, to make it more reflective.
[SA2]

He thus suggested that teaching could be more reflective and related to practice if it had the capacity to bring real, and up to date scenarios into the classroom, which encourages and motivates students to become involved.

A policy maker working as a consultant within the Ministry referred to the excellence of US business schools in terms of use of practitioner teachers. He stated:

Especially in US universities, you find teachers working in business, and maybe with a PhD as well. We don't have this much; our teachers are born to be teachers. Being in the academic field, they are separate from business. What do you expect from them, if they have never practised the practical side of business? They don't know about it, because they have never seen it. They only teach things they have read in books. You may have noticed that this is different in the US. Many come to business schools as very normal teachers, not necessarily established academics. [SA3]

Although a discussion was undertaken regarding the importance of practitioner teachers, it was not accompanied by any information concerning initiatives by the Ministry to encourage this practice. A further interviewee stated that private business schools benefitted from qualified academics working in the private sector:

This is one of the requirements that they are looking for; it is not yet legislated for by the Ministry, and we are not sure if we should allow this. It might be misused. [SA4.2]

This statement reveals there is a potential contradiction between policy, and aspects regarded as positive. The views of these interviewees are significant, as they are the academics closest to the decision makers. A separate academic made the following comment after learning they were also being interviewed for this research:

Well, it's good that you met them. They are the 'kitchen' of the Ministry.
[SA3]

The word 'kitchen' is regularly used in Arabic to refer to a place, or a group of individuals, from where new ideas and policies originate, i.e. not necessarily through official means.

In addition to in-class learning experience, cooperative training forms an element of the teaching and learning process. A policy maker in a leading business school referred to the success of the cooperative programme in contributing to a number of different aspects of school excellence. He considered the most salient benefits to comprise of experience, and the subsequent relationship between theory and practice. He also considered it beneficial for students to have attained a potential job offer.

We know our co-op programme is very good. Students get to practice what they saw in books... many of our students got their job offers while doing their co-op training. [SA2]

The policy maker further related the existence of a number of benefits for both the university and companies. He outlined the link between the two, and discussed the use of the Cooperative Programme to maintain and improve this relationship, adding that to will lead to companies acquire a more accurate expectation of a recent graduate. Universities might also benefit from feedback from students and companies concerning areas in need of

improvement. He noted the presence of committees to deal with this, but highlighted that naturally occurring feedback could often prove more useful.

In fact, many companies know what they expect from our graduates after they have tried them in the training. We have continuous discussion with some companies, but I think we still need more. [SA2]

The topics presented above with regard to teaching focused on the responses of interviewees from policy makers stakeholder group and covered a broad topic range, including teaching materials, the use of English language, teachers, and coop training.

5.5.1.3.3 Society

A third of the mission for each university concerns the relationship between, and engagement between the university and society (Laredo, 2007). One of the policy maker interviewees extensively discussed the scope of this relationship, referring to the early years after the institution of universities in Saudi Arabia:

Historically, the connection between HE institutions and society was negligible in Saudi Arabia; it was not even mandatory, because at that stage it was really about students graduating with a university degree. If you were doing that, you were achieving [something], because we basically started from zero. [SA2]

He later acknowledged the importance of developing an effective relationship, referring to the national development plan for HE, highlighting the type, and extent, of the engagement:

Now comes the question: what is the nature of this engagement? Why do I need to engage with them? I believe that universities generally, and business schools as part of them, are learning. We are learning fast. Not only learning to engage, but [also] learning what areas we need to engage in.

Here in the university, we want engagement, but any engagement needs to add value, needs to be associated with the mission of the university and needs to be highly connected to the role of the university. Because there are easy engagement methods, we can engage by offering short courses, volunteer work, basic social charitable work, [and] free consultation to some entities and young people, and so on. [SA2]

The interviewee emphasised that engagement should reflect the status of the university, stating that little attention should be accorded to activities that could be managed and offered by other organisations, i.e. high schools, charities, or training centres. He referred to ‘projects’ and ‘initiatives’ for engagement. The isolation of universities from society indicates a need for change, which is difficult both at the level of the community and the university. He commented on the wider acknowledgment of societal engagement as a driver of change as follows:

From the early 90s, I believe we started to acknowledge that the role of universities is much more than graduating students. Graduating students is important all the ways [always]. But the university’s role in society is also important... When it comes to implementation, we have challenges in implementation. We have challenges in many ways. Some are because you have an institution that is really isolated and is not connected to the outside world. And now you are asking the institution to change this culture. As we know, changing culture is always difficult. The other thing is, you don’t have a tradition of engagement with the community. [SA2]

During the interviews there was continual reference to the relationship between universities and individuals or society. This relationship is articulated according to the perceptions and views of individual interviewees, with the social position of business schools being a key subject addressed to frame the relationship between the two. As one senior academic noted:

Business schools are prestigious in some countries, while not so in others. In our country they are less recognised within society. [SA2]

He went on to note that the relationship between universities and society is ‘negligible’ at any point in time, as universities are required to focus on their duty towards graduate students. However, the need for societal engagement has come to the forefront over recent years, and he further stressed that universities’ contribution to societal relationships should reflect their role and position.

He works in a university with several additional initiatives and excellent projects, which highlight the benefits of indirect relationships, and welcome projects and initiatives by other universities:

We are never shy about sharing our experiences or having our ideas used elsewhere, even if they don’t give us any credit. [SA2]

He also highlighted the Ministry’s involvement in this relationship according to initiatives, including the Academic Development Deanship, which was based in the university and has been implemented in further universities through the Ministry. A number of newly established universities have local affiliations with older, well-established, universities, particularly in cases where the new university originated as a branch of the older establishment.

One area of engagement consists of the projects and initiatives undertaken by universities to engage with the society to which they belong. He noted that a project could initiate a significant engagement with society, even if this is not its primary focus, and went on to note a number of additional university initiatives or projects resulting in beneficial societal engagement. The first project related to the admission practices of a university with a long

tradition of systematic admission procedures, requiring applicants to undertake qualifying examinations with identical assessment measures to those of the national qualification centre, i.e. QIYAS. He considered this development as beneficial for society in two ways: firstly, through sharing excellence with other universities in the country, thereby disseminating good practice; and secondly, by spreading the concept of social judgment by means of establishing an effective method of handling the admission process, due to previous criticism of university admission as being biased. The entrepreneurship institute established by the university also proved beneficial as a means for engagement with society:

The goal is not only to teach students about start-ups, or to help them to start their own work, but also to engage in a competition across the country and to trigger some incubations. [SA2]

Universities can be presented in a number of different ways, and not necessarily through an official mono-organisational channel. Some activities by members of staff can be mapped to enhance the presence of the university in social engagement activities:

In the middle of all those not credible messages, you will encounter problems. That's why we were avoiding... but another part [is] that we also were not skilled in communication. [SA2]

The interviewee continued by suggesting that universities should approach the media to convey their message in an implicit manner:

The direct talk, if you go and say: I have accreditation, I am the best one, I graduate the best students and so on... this direct message is not the one that builds your reputation. [SA2]

He also said:

For example, if there is a positional paper [by one of our staff] that is talking about a serious issue for the community, this will be widely discussed by people. Consequently, you are indirectly building your reputation. [SA2]

This difference here is significant, in that students are attracted to business schools differently. They need to be aware of business schools ahead of their admission, and thus the school receives students based on criteria other than informed choice. However, when students enrol at a university, rather than at a specific university college, they are also exposed to different options at close proximity. A senior academic opined that it was not necessary to approach students prior to their arrival at university in order to promote the business school rather than the university.

We started this year; we didn't have this before... first of all, you don't control who comes to the university. Those coming to the university are selected in a certain manner. We don't have a problem with quality. [SA2]

He stressed that the university attracts high quality students, who are admitted to the university in general, rather than to a specific faculty or school. They then embark upon a mandatory preparatory year, in which they become familiar with the available disciplines, including those offered in the business school setting.

While universities and societies are believed to engage in informal communication activities, the relationship between them has both intentional and unintentional components. A number of stakeholder groups opined that visibility is an issue faced by business schools. He criticised the approach by which media communication ignored key stakeholders.

Sadly, students were the last party the media messages were targeting; the messages were also targeting society, the elite, the private sector and government officials, although they didn't target the students themselves.

They didn't target students with their views, or their thoughts. So, as you mentioned, most of them went to access these new departments because they weren't admitted to Engineering or Medicine. [SA2]

He further added that the plan targeted a number of different domains, one of which was engagement with the community:

Of course, there is a big track in AAFAQ. I was in a team for community engagement... this is there, no doubt. But in the implementation, differences emerged between universities in terms of applying the plan. The different circumstances at universities played a role in these differences. I think on the practice and application level, it is not fair to ask universities with staff shortages and a shortage of essentials to do the same things as well established ones. [SA2]

He clarified that old and well-established universities have an additional responsibility to widen the engagement with society.

I suspect that these actions are required from the old well-established universities. I expect [more] from them... They are trying very hard [new universities], sometimes harder than they should do, to engage with society. [SA2]

The discussion about social engagement did not open up discussions with the other interviewees in this stakeholder group, although it was raised by other groups as will be discussed below.

5.5.1.4 Theme four: 'Being known for Something' beyond the three missions

A number of aspects contributed to the 'Being Known for Something' dimension of reputation that extended beyond the university's three missions. A policy maker interviewee, who is also a consultant in the Ministry, discussed the aspect of university buildings and facilities, referring to their importance to private HE. He stressed that the stringent approach

of the Ministry when it came to the quality of the buildings and the academic campus served as a motivation to license the operation of the private higher universities. He stated:

The toughness of the Ministry ceased that... those seen to be not serious enough are being told to comply with conditions. These conditions are comprehensive, and it is a requirement that the library and sports facilities are owned, not rented. [SA4.2]

The reference made by Ministry officials to buildings and facilities indicated their importance and role in legitimising private HE; thus, indicating an assumption that all public universities maintain buildings and facilities to a high standard.

5.5.2 Senior Academics

The second most senior group interviewed in this research comprised of senior academics. Their discussions covered the majority of the areas under discussion, and their views were presented in the same order as those of the previous stakeholder group.

5.5.2.1 Theme one: Context specific attributes

As with the previous stakeholder group, this group also discussed attributes directly related to the Saudi Arabian context. These attributes include focus on religion, relationship with the Ministry, and the role of private higher education.

Religion formed the subject of the first discussion, focussing on context specific attributes. A senior academic, who engages in several roles in both public and private higher education, highlighted the role of ethics and religious values among both students and graduates. He also

critiqued the practice of society in relation to ethics, noting that students in a pre-university education setting study a number of religious topics, even though, ethically speaking, their behaviour could prove unacceptable.

Interviewee: I was against some institutes that introduced a behaviour course... because behaviour cannot be taught. It is not a text, it is a practice... it is not in your activities, and in your curricula, meaning that the student could learn from some religious text, some articles...

Interviewer: Yes, young people study religious ethics for twelve years, and at the end they are in a different direction.

Interviewee: Yes, that's right. Theoretical study doesn't mean the student can apply the concept, especially if memorising is the main method employed in education. [SA1]

The senior academic stated that this aspect should be considered by universities at the design phase and when teaching courses or activities to promote business ethics. He further stated that there is a need for compulsory subjects in each HE programme that will include Islamic and Arabic modules, suggesting the ways in which these modules could be beneficial and value-added, rather than remain a mere criterion of compliance necessary for local accreditation. This academic suggested that one method could be to establish modules linking the current business environment with religious literature, while a second might be a course highlighting the importance of Islamic ethics to the current business environment. He argued that the relationship between heritage and the current business environment could improve the potential for applicability in practice, despite only a theoretical teaching of ethics taking place in the classroom.

But we tried, while complying with regulations and a mainstream education approach, to utilise these religious courses. For example: the Ministry has a condition that [institutions must] have at least four Islamic courses of two

credits every year and Arabic [courses] of six credits. We tried to direct these courses to serve... [better practical application of religion]... for example, we focussed the course on practical business ethics in Islam, rather than teaching general Islamic literature. We tried to avoid repeating points that students had studied in secondary school. We named another course 'Current Economic Issues'. That was how we tried to use these courses.
[SA1]

A further senior academic interviewee, who was also involved in professional training in both the private and public sectors, discussed religious values and the ways they are embedded in professional education courses. He emphasised that respect and reverence towards religion forms adds value during business training. This also led to the creation of his university's flagship leadership programme, including the integration of a number of spiritual and religious sessions. He observed:

It is an integral part of Islam to include the spiritual dimension; abroad, they may not perceive it the same way. [SA6]

In addition to noting the importance of including the religious (or spiritual) element in a professional training programme, he compared this to the region termed 'abroad'; thus indicating that acknowledgment and acceptance of the role of religion is not necessarily universal. His reference to the spiritual dimension was abstracted solely to the religious role, while 'abroad' is generally understood to refer to the US, the UK, and Europe as exemplifying ideal development.

Social science was also discussed in relation to the Saudi Arabian context. A senior academic responded to the question concerning whether business schools were more orientated towards social sciences or natural sciences, noting that he preferred to classify them within the social

sciences, as exposing students to literacy and philosophy, which are social sciences, adds value to their business and management learning.

I support the suggestion that it is a social science, because it has more to do with the humanities, and everything related to people as humans who have emotions, will, attitudes and principles. I am with the school that advocates the opening up of disciplines to expand the horizon of students in literacy and philosophy in a theoretical manner, and even the challenges the world is facing, rather than classical courses. I agree with the importance of foundations, but [only] to a certain extent. [SA1]

In the context of specific attributes, there were some discussions concerning the Ministry of Higher Education. A senior academic, who was a Dean at a vocational college, and had assisted in establishing a private business school, referred to the control exercised by the Ministry as follows:

If we come back to universities, I would talk fundamentally about the universities that are copies of each other, because this was the direction influenced by the Ministry. The policy implemented in 1414 AH [1994 AD] contained assumptions from those who made the policy. There were fears that the universities might be difficult to control from a political or ideological perspective. That's why they created absolute centralism. [SA1]

In addition to concerns regarding control from the Ministry, a further important aspect related to institutions “being copies of each other”; i.e. location being the only point of difference between universities. That is, the current system leads to more similarities than differences between universities in the areas of executive policies for: (1) staff recruitment; (2) admission; and (3) examinations (MOE, 2016a).

The same interviewee considered bureaucracy a key reason for the slow progress of university development. This is because of the governance structure, whereby public universities in Saudi Arabia are controlled by board members, with the Minister of HE being the chairman of every public university board (MOE, 2016a).

Extreme [controls], all of which are tied to the power of one person, which is the Minister. The government created the HE board as an umbrella, but the Minister is the one controlling it to a great extent. That's why policies and regulations were made: the policies about teaching, examination, HE, scientific research, staff, and so on. They were linking universities together and making duplicate copies. If we consider the centralisation of decision-making, because of which, even Deans of colleges cannot be appointed without a decision from the Minister, everyone began flattering the system of the Ministry. Anyone in a leading position in universities, from the Dean upwards, could not say anything contra to the Ministry. [SA1]

He thus highlighted the board's control over the procedure of recruitment to senior positions in public universities, with limited opportunities to either deviate from or challenge the board's decisions and strategies.

He further added that other academic bodies have been established as independent bodies and remain under the umbrella of the Ministry; i.e. the National Accreditation Committee, which, despite its theoretical independence, is, in practice, controlled by the Ministry.

As a board member of the National Accreditation Committee, I feel [...] of course, its system stated that it is an independent committee, but the Minister is heading its board, and its budget is linked to the Ministry. [SA1]

He expressed criticism of both the independence of the committee and its role. He argued that it has inherited control from the Ministry, and is now forcing its directives on universities.

That's why it is now practising the dictatorial role of the Ministry in its administrative practice, by enforcing specific measures for departments and colleges. If they notice anything different from the frames they impose, they stop and fight it... that makes it dangerous for a college or a university to go outside the frame by making a new curriculum, or by... for example, if the MBA is to be applied in a different way. [SA1]

This claim was supported by the experience of an interviewee working in a private business school when designing the MBA programme. It was anticipated that the most appropriate model to execute the programme would be to contract leading professors as part-time faculty staff, as this would: (1) afford students the opportunity to be taught by highly-regarded academics in the field, and (2) prove a financially viable means for business schools seeking to hire high profile academics. However, the Ministry rejected this plan, preventing the business school from employing this approach. The Ministry is the primary and single point of contact between the government and the universities, with (as outlined previously in the literature review) the university financial model indicating the existence of extreme dependence on government budgets for both day-to-day operations and the development of new universities.

We came to the conclusion that we should seek [the Ministry's] permission to invite visiting professors for intensive week-long sessions, so that a student could take a full thirty hour course, because the executive MBA is generally more flexible than the traditional MBA... and we were running it evenings and weekends. So, when you invite a famous professor and pay him for five days, it's a costly process. If you invite people from INSEAD, Oxford, or from those famous universities, it should, above all, be planned long term. Secondly, it should be professional, and students should be ready for this challenge, because the course is intensive, and they have assignments that they need to deliver within a specific time... Before that, they need to read several books and chapters... before the professor [begins]. When we submitted this proposal to the Ministry for approval, the National

Accreditation Committee stated that this model had never before existed in the country, and would be contrary to the policy of HE, etc. So we went through long debates and a great deal was modified, which damaged the programme. This example is just to show how much governmental bureaucracy chains [us]. [SA1]

Thus, the challenges associated with control and governance by the Ministry are deemed at times to have a negative impact.

Continuing, the same interviewee argued that the involvement of the Ministry consisted of ‘a dictatorial role’, noting areas in which such involvement can occur as follows:

They are enforcing specific measures for departments and colleges; if they notice any differentials arising from the stipulations they have set, they stop the process and fight it. It is dangerous for a college or a university to go beyond the specified frame. [SA1]

Difficulties were also identified by awarding ultimate authority to the Minister of HE to appoint positions such as College Dean and Vice Rector. In addition, the interviewees noted that university rectors are usually appointed solely by the King. The interviewees commented on the reform of governance as seen in KAUST (Al Eisa and Smith, 2013) as follows:

It is straightforward, and a bit naive, as the government realised that universities have difficulties operating in the current system, and that is why KAUST was established as a different model. Why don't we free our universities? I am afraid we could force KAUST to come back to our model (laughs)... I have always said that the identity of the university, in my book, is the key to success. All other reforms will follow. [SA1]

Discussions concerning private HE (as discussed with the previous stakeholder group) were also present in the senior academics' stakeholder group, as the interviewee who had engaged in work experience in private HE viewed this as a dynamic alternative offered to the public to

facilitate responsiveness to market requirements and provide improvements to practical education. He also noted the difficulties and challenges present when responding to the requirements set out by the Ministry.

On one side, I am optimistic that business schools have a bright future, because there is momentum and support, and all universities are looking to have business administration. From another side, I am pessimistic, because the current system restricts them from proceeding and serves the existing need in the labour market and the future view of the Saudi Arabian economy.
[SA1]

5.5.2.2 Theme Two: Reputation as ‘Generalised Favourability’ or ‘Being Generally known’

This second theme addresses the dimension of reputation as ‘Being generally known’ or ‘Generalised favourability’. As discussed above, the key feature of this dimension is that it does not entail an independent judgment from stakeholders toward the university or the business school. In the policy makers group, this dimension has received minimal acceptance, and this through the lens of accreditation only. The National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment is the body responsible for accrediting local programmes in Saudi Arabia. It is officially an independent authority, responsible for a wide range of activities, including accreditation of local university programmes, although the Board Director of the commission is also the Minister of HE (NCAAA, 2016). A senior academic who has had experience with accreditation bodies outside Saudi Arabia, stated with regard to the commission that:

Its system stated that it is an independent committee, but the Minister heads its board, and its budget is linked to the Ministry. It is now practicing a dictatorial role for the Ministry in its administrative practice. [SA1]

The reference to accreditation in this response might not indicate a preferential value given to accreditation by this specific stakeholder, but it does clarify the status of the accreditation committee and the perception of its status among stakeholders. The perception about the accreditation body also affects how accreditation is perceived. The above quote indicated there is less value in accreditation because of the accreditation body. The experience of the interviewee, and his implicit comparison between the national accreditation body and the international one he worked for might have influenced his opinions about local accreditation.

5.5.2.3 Theme three: Reputation as ‘Being Known for Something’ in light of the three missions

As with the previous stakeholder group, this theme highlights the findings that arose in the interviews regarding the university’s three missions.

5.5.2.3.1 Research

The first of the three missions to be presented by this stakeholder group relates to the university’s research role. A senior academic, who worked at several posts in both academia and business, discussed research activity from the perspective of private sector support, as a means to fund research projects. He indicated that private sector involvement in funding and supporting research is a form of social responsibility, as companies have no expectation that benefit will arise from supporting research in universities:

One of the things highlighted [is] that even companies sponsor research Chairs with generous funds. They do not expect any feedback or benefit from [the research]. Mostly, they fund them because of social responsibility or political pressures. [SA6]

This response highlighted a previously anticipated area of interest, i.e. that some Chairs are funded by the private sector. The motive for funding research was linked to social responsibility when undertaken by companies. However, it was assumed that the benefit was primarily limited to fulfilling the requirements set out in social responsibility agendas, rather than an expectation that they would benefit from the knowledge gained from the research.

5.5.2.3.2 Teaching and teaching methods

The second aspect of the university's mission, as discussed in this thesis, concerns factors related to teaching, and this was also discussed by this stakeholder group. A senior academic referred to soft skills as a key advantage to newly established private business schools. When discussing his role in the establishment of such schools, his first comment pertained to students' skills, as follows:

We expand the horizons of our students, and they look to their future career as being more than traditional business administration. Of course, we started the prep year, as many universities were doing. I think we succeeded in that, because we were focusing on key aspects in language education, but within a wider goal in terms of critical thinking and personal skills and presentation skills. This is because, in the end, this is very important in the field of business administration. Things like the leadership vision of the person when going into the labour market. [SA1]

He acknowledged the importance of traditional training as taking place in conjunction with soft skills, including those related to leadership. Soft skills were viewed as according added

value, ensuring a school's advantage over its competitors. Furthermore, he noted the future importance of any acquired skills:

That's why I believe that the alumni of [COLLEGE X], despite their small number, were welcomed into the labour market [SA1]

Indicators of the quality of students were viewed in terms of the benefit to the market, and the extent to which students were deemed employable.

Any discussion of teaching must always consider the role of the teacher. A senior academic interviewee, who was currently involved in designing and offering business and management courses to executives in the public and the private sectors, insisted that the value of a practitioner teacher originated from both the respect of, and acceptance by, his/her peers. He said:

If I bring someone whose entire experience has been in universities and they have never gone out to practice, they would burn out after two minutes in front of the audience, because they have nothing to add. So I bring people from outside; they are very expensive, but they have the experience. For example, last time we were offering a course on risk management the speaker was a department head in Shell for risk management. So, he talked about what he has applied, and when he speaks people listen and have respect for his views. [SA6]

He further added:

I visited a leading institution in Australia; they have a condition that each member of staff should spend at least three years [working in industry] in the area in which he teaches. [SA6]

This stakeholder group also discussed in-work training as an aspect of the teaching and learning process. A senior academic working as a project consultant with the Ministry of

labour acknowledged the importance of cooperative programmes, arguing that they indicated very low levels of efficiency:

Even the summer training programmes carried out by the Ministry of Labour didn't work well for us. It was a great opportunity for students to come to train over the summer for a year or two, and then get job offer afterwards. But it was just a display... the Ministry is now offering 1500 Saudi Riyal [around £250] per trainee [per month] to companies that don't want to train students. [SA6]

He criticised the handling of the programme by business organisations, arguing that companies fail to consider its value seriously; they simply comply with the regulations and requirements set out by the Labour Ministry. Furthermore, he disagreed with the alternative options offered by the Ministry (i.e. funding training for job seekers), rather than immersing students in practical in-work training. Additionally, while this issue is not the specific focus of this research, a senior academic involved in executive training programmes critiqued the wider understanding of MBA programmes:

We have misunderstood the role of the MBA, and the role of professional qualifications. The MBA is, by design, not designed for business school graduates. When we say that someone took a Bachelor's degree in business then an MBA, this is not relevant, as an MBA is for those from Medicine and Engineering who wish to become managers in hospitals, real estate, hospitality, etc., so they take an MBA... The MBA is like a Bachelor's degree in business condensed into 1 or 1.5 years, so if we spread the MBA over four years it will become a business degree. So the MBA has the same content. [SA6]

Thus, he proposed that greater awareness of the role of the MBA could be achieved by targeting appropriate audiences and raising stakeholders' awareness.

5.5.2.3 Theme Four: Reputation as ‘Being Known for Something’ beyond the three missions

There was little discussion among the senior academics stakeholder group relating to this theme; i.e. aspects related to university administration, buildings, or the use of information technology.

A senior academic also referred to the use of technology when discussing ongoing developments in the HE industry, in relation to cooperation with industry, and the use of up to date resources. He stated:

There is also a significant shift in E-learning and the use of computers.
[SA2.1]

No comment was made regarding the use of technology when raised in the interviews.

Although acknowledgement of its use by other stakeholders justified its inclusion as an aspect capable of influencing the preference for one university over another.

5.5.3 Teaching Academics

The third stakeholder group comprised teaching academics. They are those responsible for executing the business school’s agenda; however, they have less involvement in the decision-making process.

5.5.3.1 Theme one: Context specific attributes

As with the previous stakeholder groups, the first theme to be presented relates to the interviewees' discussion as regards context related attributes. This group discussed aspects such as the role of higher education, and relationship with the Ministry.

In the context of specific attributes, one academic referred to the lack of clarity in the roles of universities or business schools, even referring to their own staff.

*It is not clear to the faculty; [so] what is the strategy of business school?
Then it is to be expected that its role is less well-known to the general public.
[TA2]*

This indicates that, although the agenda of universities and business schools is still developing, this is not necessarily communicated to all those concerned. There are thus two possibilities explaining why some academics working as members of staff in a business school setting lack awareness of the strategy of the institution in which they are employed: (1) the school does not have such a strategy, or (2) there has been a failure as regards raising awareness of an existing strategy. However, both may be somewhat true.

Furthermore, one teaching academic criticised the prolonged process of decision-making, and the level of authority required for decisions, such as assigning a textbook to a module or introducing a new module.

It's a lengthy process. If I want to change the text-book, or suggest a new one, it goes to too many levels and committees to get approved. I could lose interest and enthusiasm. [TA1]

A second academic also noted the requirement to gain approval from the university board so as to introduce a new programme. This leads to difficulties when board meetings are taking place a maximum of twice a year. It is a prolonged process to ensure programmes are in place, and to respond to any requests for clarification or amendments:

It very bureaucratic here, everything needs to be approved by the board. Sometimes it is only a clarification, but the approval goes to the next meeting, which might not happen until a few months later. [TA2]

The opinions of the teaching academics were all focused on negative perception about business schools and higher education in general within Saudi Arabia. It is worth mentioning here that all the teaching academics interviewed hold PhD degrees from universities outside Saudi Arabia and are thus exposed to different HE environments.

5.5.3.2 Theme Two: Reputation as ‘Generalised Favourability’ or ‘Being Generally known’

The interviewees in this stakeholder group made no contribution to aspects falling under the dimension of reputation.

5.5.3.3 Theme three: Reputation as ‘Being Known for Something’ in the light of the three missions

As with the previous stakeholder group, this theme focused on interviewees’ discussions around the three missions of the university.

5.5.3.3.1 Research

The first part of this section focuses on attributes related to a university's three missions, in the research domain.

An academic from a business school indicated that lack of research is a direct consequence of fewer incentives being awarded by academic institutes for research and publications than for teaching or other administrative duties. He further observed that members of staff frequently find they are prevented from undertaking research due to engagement in other duties:

There is no incentive to make the effort to publish papers. Strangely, I didn't benefit from the five years I spent on my research concerning oil prices and their effect... all because of other duties at the university. If I had been just left alone for a year or two, then I would forget everything. This is because all decisions and administration process decisions in the university are restricted to PhDs. Our business PhDs have commitments beyond the university and so academic research comes last in their interest. They don't have free time. [TA3]

Thus, the participant considered the non-academic workload significantly reduces research productivity. He was, at the time of the interviewee, in the post of Deputy Dean for the business school, and so he also discussed a timetable he was preparing for lectures, commenting that:

This should not be my job. [TA3]

This discussion did not pursue the issue of any lack of incentive to focus on publication. Indeed, the researcher was aware that the career progression from assistant to associate,

followed by professor, is primarily dependant on an applicant's participation in research and publication (KAU, 2014).

5.5.3.3.2 Teaching

The teaching academics interviewed also stated that they considered teaching their primary role. They discussed teaching as challenging to students especially when discussing cooperative programmes.

One academic, at the same AACSB accredited business school referred to the effort required by students to progress in their studies, i.e. they were required to face both academic and disciplinary challenges, to abide by the rules and standards of the school:

You may say: "I won't go to this university because it is exhausting and requires more work". As a doctor, I have more work. Do you know how many forms I have to fill to complete a course file? These forms are just for one thing, for project presentation. Then, I have the learning outcomes for each course. So work has increased. An academic in another university wouldn't have this. So you feel that some students are maybe scared because they have to be up to the mark. If someone is not up to the mark, he can't go further. So these things have to be considered. [TA1]

A teaching academic commented on a course he was teaching to final year students; it had been completed by some students, and others were about to commence their cooperative training. He highlighted the presence of a clear distinction between understanding and engagement, prior to, and following, the course.

It is apparent that they have better engagement and tend to discuss their ideas better than those how have not embarked on their training. [TA2]

5.5.3.4 Theme Four: Reputation as ‘Being Known for Something’ beyond the three missions

The interviewees from the teaching academics stakeholder group made no contribution to the discussion about how a university’s reputation is constructed, beyond referring to the three missions.

5.5.4 Employers

The employers consulted in this research, as discussed earlier in the Methodology chapter, were drawn from the private, public, and semi-public sectors. They hold opinions concerning three out of four themes. Similar to teaching academics they did not provide input to the fourth theme, ‘Being known for something’ beyond the three missions.

5.5.4.1 Theme one: Context specific attributes

As with previous stakeholder groups, the first theme to be presented is concerned with interviewees’ discussions about context related attributes. This group discussed the aspect of culture with regard to this theme only.

An employer referenced culture when explaining why students have a lower preference for attending business courses when first enrolling at universities.

*What I understand is that we have a cultural issue. That Management is [considered of] less [status/value] than others. And it is not a solid major. So they ask why they should not go [and] take something that has a value.
[SE1]*

The employer's inclusion of this cultural issue clearly indicates culture plays a significant role in the positioning and ranking of different areas of study. This might also signal a lack of acknowledgment on the part of some employers concerning the importance of business schools and their benefits, or their ability to supply suitably qualified graduates.

5.5.4.2 Theme Two: Reputation as 'Generalised Favourability' or 'Being Generally known'

This second theme is concerned with the dimension of reputation as 'Being generally known' or 'Generalised favourability'. As discussed previously, the key feature of this dimension is that it does not entail an independent judgment from a stakeholder towards the university or the business school. This stakeholder group discussed aspects related to this theme citing comparison, ranking, accreditation, and the university's age.

From a comparative perspective, one employer interviewee answered the question concerning the lack of any preference for business schools as follows:

I will be honest with you. If you are talking about business schools, the graduate business schools in Saudi Arabia versus the rest of the world, we are very far [behind]. We are very far from where we need to be because... I think graduate education is not just like Accounting and Finance and so on. [SE3]

He argued that business schools in Saudi Arabia differ from their counterparts in the rest of the world, noting that:

We are very far from where we need to be. [SE3]

He did not cite any specific criteria to justify or further elucidate his opinion, particularly in relation to clarify his statement of Saudi Arabia “being far from where we need to be”.

However, the entire interview reveals clear indications of areas in need of development, in particular, those which are currently being developed as part of the school’s development plan. This leads the researcher to assume these were the aspects to which the interviewee wished to refer when providing a comparison with the international universities. He referred to education as competitive, and noted this in relation to employability in the private sector as follows:

When you compare people who have studied abroad with people who have studied locally, they are all humans, no difference... The difference is that the education they get is very different, which enables them to compete better in the private sector and to deliver. [SE3]

The reference to ‘all being human’ is a clear indication that the deficiency does not lie within the control of individual, but is a consequence of where they took their degree. Furthermore, the reference to the ability to compete in the private sector echoes a discussion concerning the significant differences between the public and private sectors, which reveal the private sector is a more specific and demanding environment.

The interviewee also referred to his lack of familiarity with other institutes in the country:

Well, I don’t have any. I cannot speak from an intelligent perspective; I am not sure. I don’t know the difference between the schools and... mmm. [SE3]

He subsequently attempted to add a convincing justification to his argument, by referring to the issue of ranking, as follows:

But, in general, there is no secret formula. The way we approach [choosing universities] depends on a sort of ranking, I would say an informal or formal ranking. This kind of level of preference... does not mean that when people come [for a job], you know, you look at the CV and you see significant things. [SE3]

Subsequently, another interviewee used ‘ranking’ at the outset of his discussion of the criteria applied when choosing candidates from business schools, saying:

Ranking criteria is important as well [SE4]

He gave no further indication of what he meant by ‘ranking criteria’, moving on to discuss other attributes related to candidates as individuals. This indicates that for some of the interviewees, ranking was viewed as a significant measure of choice.

One interviewee from the same group employed a similar approach when referring to university ranking, following this with a discussion about the candidate’s personality, stating:

No doubt I consider the university from which he graduates, and its ranking, and whether the person seems careful [professional] in general. [SE3]

He further added:

The more established the university the better. There is no doubt that things like ranking make a difference. But in the end, it comes back to the positions I have available. If we have a large number [of applicants], we start with [those who have graduated from] strong universities, then look at the others. [SE3]

The interviewee primarily used generalisations to express his preferences, which appeared to lack a direct relationship with the actions of the university or the business school. For

example, the word ‘established’ is generally employed to infer that something has a long and generally accepted history (Dictionary, 2016). The interviewee employed the word ‘strong’ without clarifying its meaning in the context of HE. The use of the general meaning of words could indicate the interviewee’s lack of confidence in the most effective means of prioritising business schools and/or their outcome.

A further interviewee from the same group (i.e. employers) also used ranking as a means of preference. He referred to one local university as a preferred choice, and when asked to clarify his reasoning, he used the term ‘reputation’, directly linking this to ranking.

Interviewee: The university, no doubt [X-university] has the strongest reputation in SA.

Interviewer: How do you see that it has the strongest reputation?

Interviewee: From its ranking... and their serious approach to teaching... this is one. Second, I find the marks for the interview [employment interview] important. [SE4]

The direct link made in this interview between reputation and ranking is one of only a few cases in which an interviewee was able to give a clear and explicit explanation concerning their views about the meaning of reputation and its manner of construction.

A further interviewee from the employers’ group added the dimension of informal ranking:

But, in general, there is no secret formula... The way we approach [choosing universities] depends on a sort the ranking, I would say... informal or formal ranking... this kind of level of preference... does not mean that when people come [for a job], you know, you look at the CV and you see significant things. [SE3]

He made no specific reference to the nature of informal ranking, nor did he explain how it can be identified. He could therefore be expressing a view held by the general public, without solid evidence to support his opinion.

Similar to the subject of ranking, Accreditation is a further aspect included under the dimension of 'Being generally known'. An interviewee from the employers' stakeholder group asserted that local accreditation was important for candidates, referring specifically to the selection criteria for prospective employees:

Well, we do look for the marks, then we have an oral exam and an interview. It's based on that. And of course we build on the accreditation from the Ministry of HE. [SE2]

It was noted that at that time, the legitimisation of the HE qualification was being reconstituted, and thus major changes could then be observed in the near future. Confusion arises concerning the 'equivalence' of degrees obtained abroad (i.e. officially under the control of the Ministry of Education), while accreditation is controlled by NCAAA (i.e. considered an independent body).

On the other hand, a separate interviewee from the employers' group expressed a different viewpoint, and devalued the importance of ranking and accreditation when asked about them. He viewed the curriculum and teaching materials as the most important indicators in establishing a preference for a business school. When asked if he referred to aspects such as ranking, or the media presence of the institute, he stated:

No, because we know they are not real. All this ranking is not right. [SE1]

This devaluation of ranking is supported by a more critical view of the interviewee between universities and the work place. Thus, he is not accepting of the external judgment provided by ranking bodies, or the need to shape his view or decision, but to use his own judgment.

He went on to describe, in further detail, the role of the subjects studied, including how the gap between a student's studies and real life experience is filled by their college as described later in this section.

Similarly, the age of a university is classified in this research in reference to the dimension of 'Being generally known'. One employer viewed the age of the university as a factor in candidates' decision making processes, as follows:

The more established the university the better. [SE4]

Although, as discussed previously in the language section (under the methodology chapter, page 115), the word he uses to express the notion 'established' might not be strictly accurate, although its most common and understood use refers to age.

Further to ranking and accreditation, one interviewee from the stakeholder group referred to the geographical location of the university, and went on to discuss this in relation to business' preference for employing candidates from a local university:

Sometimes, I prefer to hire people from the local city or who have graduated from the local university. Although they might be less equipped than those graduated from better universities, I feel they are more sustainable and they benefit from being home. [SE2]

His view is supported by his experience with recruiting, including the relatively lower rate of turnover he has observed among local students. His preference for location, therefore, acknowledges that he prioritises local graduates over those from other universities, despite such institutions potentially being of a higher quality, and having a more prestigious reputation.

5.5.4.3 Theme three: Reputation as ‘Being Known for Something’ in light of the three missions

The second dimension of reputation employed in this research (as laid out in the literature review) concerns ‘Being Known for Something’. This dimension is classified here into two groups: the first informed by the three missions of the universities (as previously discussed), and the second covering aspects not falling directly within these three missions. This theme is concerned attributes that fall under the three university’s missions. It will offer what has been stated by the interviewees in the employers’ stakeholder groups. This group only discussed teaching under the three missions of the university and did not speak about social engagement nor research in HE.

An interviewee from the employers’ group linked the preference for some universities to their teaching materials. He noted that such universities consulted on the role of the workplaces, gaining feedback concerning the requirements that enable students to join the workforce readily upon graduation, stating that the course followed by the applicant is one factor informing the recruitment decision.

Look at the curriculum, I ask for the transcript for the applicant. For example, the outcomes for some universities like KFUPM, Jubail Industrial College, combine the needs of the market with what they are doing. This is therefore reflected in the curriculum and the courses they offer. There is more than one college here in Riyadh, and those responsible for designing curricular have come to meet us and asked us about our needs, and the competencies, skills, major, that are required, including what areas, and where the gaps can be found. [SE1]

One employer interviewee emphasised the significant role of teachers. When questioned about preferred business schools, he first referred to ranking and accreditation, but subsequently insisted that the teacher was the most important factor:

It depends on the teacher who teaches you. [SE4]

He also referred to management practice:

You could see in your workplace a successful manager and a poor manager. Why does one become successful? Because he shares his experience, transferring his knowledge to people working with him. [SE4]

5.5.4.4 Theme Four: Reputation as ‘Being Known for Something’ beyond the three missions

The interviewees in the employer stakeholder did not add to the discussion concerning how a university’s reputation is constructed beyond the three missions.

5.5.5 Students and families

The final group presented in this findings chapter comprised of students and their families. As previously discussed in the methodology chapter, these included two individual students, two separate parents, and a group of observed students. This stakeholder group contributed

input to context specific aspects, as well as to the two dimensions of reputation discussed in this thesis.

5.5.5.1 Theme one: Context specific attributes

As with the previous stakeholder groups, the first theme presented concerns the interviewees discussion as it effects context related attributes. This group discussed aspects related to: religion, culture, and the university's education mission.

One student from this stakeholder group raised the role of religion in reference to deciding upon a future career. This discussion focussed on whether it is reasonable to work for a bank if it has failed to comply with Islamic guidance in relation to charging interest. The student proposed that it was possible to apply for such a job, and accept it if offered, regardless of the mainstream religious view, noting:

Banks, some people say it is prohibited and so on, but I see it as work. What can I do? [SS2]

This revealed that the role of religion played a less significant role than suspected when considering future job prospects. This cannot be viewed as a devaluation on the part of this individual student of the role of religion, particularly as he did not discuss in detail his opinions concerning religious values and their relationship to ethical applications. It should therefore be noted that there is an increasing focus on the issue of the compliance of the banking industry with Islamic guidance, as discussed in further detail in the discussion chapter.

An interviewee from the parents' stakeholder group discussed cultural values and local culture in relation to the choice of university. He opened the discussion by setting out the context and the boundaries of local culture. His first response was:

OK, considering our culture, that we live in SA... [SF1]

He then proceeded to be open in his views during the rest of the interview, discussing issues as they arose, including (as outlined in the following section) the different choices facing a son and a daughter.

Gender was mentioned as relevant in several of the interviews, although this area was not included in the interview guide, and the author's intention was not to investigate it in-depth. Had the researcher anticipated this aspect, and included it in the interview guide, this theme could have prompted rich contributions from the interviewees. A parent interviewee pointed out that children must make different decisions about going to university, dependant on their gender:

If I have a son, I could let him go to any university, even outside my city, because it is linked to our local culture. In certain circumstances, he could better handle the issue. But, on the other hand, I think it is much harder to let a daughter study away, not because of lack of trust, but I believe a girl needs family support more than a boy. [SF1]

He stressed that this difference is not a result of any discrimination towards, or less trust in, females, but because he believes (particularly when discussing the location of a university) that females need to be closer to their families so they can rely on their support to increase their confidence. He referred to natural differences that, in his view, lead to girls being more

desirous of maintaining strong family ties than boys. At the same time, he also aligned his comments with the wider context of Saudi culture and the situation in contemporary society.

When it comes to family and cooperation and support from family, there are behaviours and psychologies placed by God in people... both men and women. In our current culture, even with some more openness, like if they allow women to drive. Me personally, I don't encourage a girl to study away from her parents. I prefer that, unless there are compelling circumstances, like [if] the major she wants is not there... that's why I see some parents were forced to go with their daughters to [where they] study. [SF1]

His reference to local culture, and the potential challenges faced by girls was supported by his experience of living in the UK for a number of years. In an informal chat following the interview, he noted that conditions would have been different if his daughter had been in the UK at the time of her admission to university. He pointed to two significant differences, i.e. logistical and cultural. The logistical factors included: (1) the ease and availability of public transportation; (2) the ease of accessing utilities; and (3) the reliability of shopping and food delivery services. The cultural factors he noted primarily arose from the difficulties a girl might face in a male dominated sphere (i.e. the current situation in Saudi Arabia), which include the negative attitudes a female who is geographically distant from her family might face from society.

Limitations on female education not only exist in relation to the location of the university, but also the choice of study discipline. The interviewee argued that some disciplines might prove less suitable for girls, and that it was part of his role as a parent to direct his daughter's interest towards more suitable disciplines. He further noted that, regarding his role in choosing the location of the university, although he would not force his daughter to study at a

university closer to home, he would do everything possible to help her avoid choosing a university located far away. He justified his preferences in reference to societal, cultural, and religious values.

Well, I could go back to say if a son... or a daughter... Even if I allow it, it might not be acceptable in society; my daughter could suffer later from this decision, and it is my duty to ensure she always [is directed to make] the best choice. [SF1]

Parents as a stakeholder group clearly felt responsible for ensuring both their sons and their daughters made the best choice possible. Cultural factors appeared to place additional pressure on the perception of this responsibility in the case of daughters. It is therefore acknowledged that the issue of gender could contribute to the limitations imposed on females when choosing to embark on HE in Saudi Arabia (Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013).

When referring to local context, one student interviewee discussed the education mission in relation to context related aspects, highlighting the importance of being appropriately prepared and qualified to enrol in the programme. He referred to the need for higher marks and improved language abilities to improve his chances of enrolment:

I need to get high scores to be able to go and study a Master's abroad. Scholarships are more difficult now, but I will try. [SS2]

It is clear that the initiative of the education mission, which offers sponsorship to students, attracted interest from students and was viewed as a potential motivator (aside from employment) when considering life post-graduation.

5.5.3.4 Theme Two: Reputation as ‘Generalised Favourability’ or ‘Being Generally known’

This second theme covers the dimension of reputation as ‘Being generally known’ or ‘Generalised favourability’. As discussed earlier, the key feature of this dimension is that it does not entail an independent judgment from a stakeholder toward the university or the business school. Students and family stakeholder groups discussed aspects related to this theme in the form of comparison, ranking, accreditation, development in HE, the university’s age, and its geographical location.

While discussing the issue of preference, one student interviewee noted that his current university had not been his first choice. When asked why he considered other universities to be of a higher quality, he replied:

Well, it’s people’s view. The public are saying that. [SS2]

It is significant that this statement: (1) makes a comparison without referring to any feature of the university, and (2) makes a judgement based on the views of ‘other people’ without specifying their identity. Perception without evidence can therefore gain sway, even over life changing decisions.

Further to the theme of comparison, ranking was also present by this stakeholder group. The student interviewees demonstrated an awareness of, and an interest in, the concept of ranking. However, they differed in their opinions about its importance, and the validity of ranking as an indicator of quality, or criteria for choice. One student interviewee expressed a positive view of ranking, noting that ranking formed an important criterion when selecting one

university over another. When asked if he had considered ranking when choosing a university, he stated:

Yes, of course. X-university is the best. It is ranked first in Saudi Arabia. And I think [it is ranked] seventy-nine worldwide. [SS2]

Thus, the university's higher ranking justified his acceptance of the failure of his own application.

Even when I applied to them, they replied immediately: Just no. This was because my marks weren't high enough. [SS2]

While this may not have been the exact expression used by the university in rejecting him, he clearly failed to meet the university's admission criteria. During his discussion, the student failed to specify exactly what he meant by ranking, or to what ranking figure he was referring when discussing ranking.

A second student, however, expressed a lower willingness to accept ranking measures:

Yes, I don't believe in them [ranking figures]. In Saudi Arabia, because maybe here in SA the function [of the university] is different - not research, but teaching. Ranking is based on research mostly. [SS3]

He demonstrated a potentially deeper understanding of the measures commonly used by some ranking databases, while also acknowledging a number of aspects of the HE system in Saudi Arabia that could lead to ranking being misleading, or not adequately affecting the actual situation.

Another aspect discussed by this stakeholder group, within the dimension of ‘Being generally known’ consisted of the age of the university. When discussing his children’s choice of university, one parent expressed the following view concerning the contrasting benefits of the old, and newly established, universities.

I am imagining now the development in universities, it’s right I could not encourage him to go to a newly established university. There is a difference between a transferred university and one that is newly established... maybe in some cases if it is within your city... you could take that excuse. But if you are going away anyway, go to a better university. Especially if you have aptitude. [SF1]

He clearly accepted a preference for more established universities, while interestingly, also distinguished between newly created universities (i.e. a completely new institution) and those established as branches of larger universities, i.e. some larger universities had previously established branches in other cities, which later became autonomous, forming new universities with expanded capabilities and additional departments.

For him, in addition to a university’s age, geography plays a major role in the choice of a university.

The geographic location and the use of technology, they both play a role. [SF1]

He further emphasised that, in order to be selected, any university located a distance away needed to be significantly better than one closer to home, as he perceived no benefit to relocating to another city unless it was to attend a university of a significantly higher quality:

Maybe, in some cases, if it is within your city... you could make that excuse... but if you are going any distance, go to a better university. Especially if you have capabilities. [SF1]

5.5.3.5 Theme three: Reputation as ‘Being Known for Something’ in light of the three missions

The second dimension of reputation conceptualised in this research concerns ‘Being known for Something’. This theme is concerned with the three missions of the university. Interviewees from this stakeholder group discussed all three missions: research, teaching, and social engagement.

5.5.3.5.1 Research

As in the case of all the previous groups, the issue of research was the first mission discussed by this stakeholder group. A student interviewee recognised that research is not necessarily an integral part of university activity, noting that, when discussing university ranking, local universities appear to be less focussed on research:

Here in Saudi Arabia, the focus is different; not research, but teaching. Ranking is based on research at most. [SS3]

However, undergraduates in Saudi Arabia generally tend not to undertake research activities, particularly when their teachers are not themselves focussed on research. The above quotation indicates that either the student was knowledgeable about debates concerning university ranking, or followed relevant media coverage and newspaper articles; i.e. the current researcher assumes the interviewee gained additional knowledge of the debates concerning ranking from local media sources.

5.5.3.5.2 Teaching

The second mission consists of teaching, and was the most discussed topic by all stakeholder groups, including both students and parents.

One student interviewee criticised the quality of the text books suggested by the university, stating they had been imported from a neighbouring Arab country. He claimed the books are of a low standard, and attributed the decision to use them to the shift from using English to Arabic:

For example, they could bring books from abroad, from leading universities. When they launched the marketing department, we asked them if they were going to bring books from abroad. There is one guru in marketing, I forgot his name, but when we asked them to bring his books, they said: it is all in English and we have already moved to Arabic. So they could translate it, but they said they could not. So they brought books from Egypt. [SS2]

A further student referred to disappointment with the approach of his university. Prior to attending, he had been motivated by a number of personal development workshops, which had given him a positive impression of Management, and leadership studies in particular. However, he was disappointed once he was studying in the business school environment, because the learning materials seemed to be obsolete and lacking in real life examples:

Sometimes, when you have something in mind, and when you get to university and see something else, you might feel different. In my mind, I was going to study management, leadership and so on, but then I found I was to study accounting, finance, economy and management. In [X] University, you can become depressed by the subjects you study, but if the desire had a significant effect, I would say no, not for me. [SS3]

One parent interviewee noted the issue of teaching materials as informing the preference for one university over another. He recalled his own studies in a Saudi business school, and claimed to be proud of the university at which he had attained his degree, as the teaching materials were always kept up to date; he emphasised that the textbooks used were always less than five years old. He added that the contemporary information in the textbooks could reduce the shock experienced by students when embarking on their careers.

As a student who is about to graduate, I was shocked that the information I gathered during my studies was not correct at times, while Western books (and this is an important point)... [have correct information]. Our books unfortunately are not up to date, maybe because access to information is easier in English. [SS3]

Furthermore, one student referred to a specific aspect of teaching as relating to the challenges he encountered in terms of his lack of opportunity to enrol in the university awarded the first AACSB accreditation:

Well, look, a KFUPM student will not graduate unless he is exhausted; they make them work really hard. Students come out really squeezed, they undergo every possible thing, they don't indulge themselves as students do here... Students in other universities could be better than them, but they didn't had the chance to go to KFUPM. [SS2]

He also compared the above university with his current university:

Here, before they do the midterm [examination], they gave a five marks bonus. We haven't had the exam yet. There [at KFUPM], they don't have this. For example my friend [at KFUPM] has just graduated. There were 3500 [students] when he was admitted. Only 850 graduated. These are the universities [we have to compete with]... we have some strengths, but not at that level... This bonus is not necessary. Let some people fail. When they told me it is twenty-five students only [that they would cut down the cohort to], I

worked hard to realise my dreams. Out of 150 they take only twenty-five. They could have destroyed my dream. [SS2]

He talked positively about his experience and the effort he had made to become enrolled in the required field of study, while explicitly praising the importance of challenging students to work hard; noting:

Then anyone who needs something will make an effort toward [achieving] it. They asked me make the effort to get it. I am glad I did it... so this is good for the university. There is no need for the extra bonus. If some students don't want to study, it's best to get them out. We have some students [who have] transferred from KFUPM. They say, "What is this? This is just like a game. [child's play]. [SS2]

This stakeholder group also discussed the specific teaching aspect involved in the use of the English language. A parent interviewee related the newness and quality of teaching the material to the language in which information was provided:

Material in Arabic is usually outdated. I would like my son to study regularly updated material. I would therefore choose a university where the teaching is in English. [SF1]

similar point was raised by a student interviewee, who noted his university's new policy to teach in Arabic rather than English. During his first two years in college he had been taught in English, and in the current year the programme was being delivered in Arabic. He noted:

I can see the difference; the material we are studying now is very old. I don't know what types of businesses they are talking about. Many examples are for things that do not exist now. [SS2]

These two quotations reveal the presumption that teaching materials produced in English are superior to Arabic materials. This raises an assumption about the superiority of English materials, legitimising the preference of English as a medium of teaching. However, the use of English was not always viewed positively. A student interviewee who elsewhere acknowledged the importance and newness of English teaching materials, nevertheless observed that courses in English were:

Difficult. [SS2]

When the interviewer questioned if he was referring to only a small increase in difficulty, he immediately replied:

No, much harder, they were very hard. [SS2]

Specific difficulties linked to the use of English were as follows:

We were in the preparatory year, when we had to master the language, but we didn't. They [the teachers] were not that serious, so we suffered later. [SS2]

He revealed the greater difficulties of studying in English as compared to Arabic, while also noting that the reasons for such difficulties arose from a lack of effective teaching of the language during the preparatory year.

A further aspect specifically related to teaching was the preparatory year, which a student interviewee considered to be of 'low quality', stating that it had resulted in further setbacks for his subsequent academic progression. He referred to the fact that the programme's level

of English hindered his studies, attributing this to his university's shift from English to Arabic as a medium of instruction, which he perceived to be a waste of time.

In the prep year, we had only one subject, the rest were all Arabic... It was the same English levels 1,2,3,4 for four hours a day... but most of the staff were careless. They told us that it was up to us whether we attended or not... and they didn't give you a DN [denial from study for excessive absence]; you could attend only ten hours each the term, they didn't have any issues with that... this was a bit chaotic. [SS2]

This stakeholder group also discussed the role of the teacher in the teaching process. A student interviewee described non-Saudi university teachers working in Saudi universities in relation to the Arabic country from which they had originated. The student's comments revealed an assumption that they were of a lower quality than Saudi counterparts. He justified this by referring to a negative experience with one teacher:

The material was not that hard. If he wanted to make it easy, he could. If he wanted to make it hard, he could. The course was called 'Foundations of Management', and was quite easy, but he was making it complicated, to the extent that sixteen students [out of around thirty] dropped out of the course. I also dropped out of this course and decided to follow it with another tutor. [SS2]

Another student interviewee discussed the importance of the teacher, as follows:

He has an impact. It does depend on student effort, but the teacher's role is very important. [SS3]

A student observed during the data collection phase (as previously discussed on page 87), discussed the issue of in-work training (i.e. the cooperative programme). He reflected on his recent experiences and expressed a number of preferences connected with his future

prospects. Although he did not go into detail, his focus was on being employed in the government sector. Although he had not enjoyed his cooperative placement in a public sector hospital, he acknowledged the importance of the experience, and its enhancement of his understanding of a number of subjects.

5.5.3.5.3 Society

The third of the university's missions, as discussed under the second reputation dimension (i.e. 'Being Known for Something'), relates to the university's relationship with its immediate environment. Engagement with society is viewed as being, in many ways, straightforward, and can include: (1) short courses beneficial to society; (2) voluntary work; (3) charitable activities; and (4) offers of free consultation for a number of entities. A student interviewee devalued the importance of this form of engagement:

I don't care what the university is doing in areas like charity and volunteers; this does not add any value to me as a student. [SS3]

No other comments were directed specifically towards social engagement within universities from the students' and family members' stakeholder groups.

5.5.3.6 Theme four: 'Being known for Something' beyond the three missions

Two aspects contributed to the 'Being Known for Something' dimension of reputation, from the perspective of the interviewed students and families: (i) university admissions procedures and bureaucracy, and (ii) the university's buildings and facilities.

One student interviewee reflected on his experience by comparing the two universities at which he had studied. He observed differences in the administrative approaches of each. The university at which he had embarked upon his degree had been located at some distance from his home city, while the other (to which, by the time of the interview, he had transferred) was located in his home city. He stated:

People say that University X [nearer home] is not good. I witnessed this when my sister graduated from it. I had applied to both universities and got a reply from them [University Y, away from home]... I don't know why they [University X] delayed things. This was not a good way of handling matters. [SS2]

In another interview, a different student interviewee, when questioned about his preferences in relation to a specific university, mentioned buildings and facilities as being of lesser importance when explaining his choice and evaluation. He excluded a variety of factors of potential interest when listing others he considered: (1) the core activity of the university (i.e. teaching), and (2) its primary outcome (i.e. students).

To clarify it for you at the beginning, I don't care about the buildings, facilities or anything like that; I do care about teaching and the way the students are treated. [SS3]

The previous sections presented the views of stakeholder groups in turn with reference to all the themes classified in this study. These views then demonstrate how reputation is constructed in the minds of stakeholders.

5.6 Analysis

The following section analyses the data presented above, highlighting the similarities and differences between the stakeholders in preparation for the subsequent discussion chapter.

The organisation of the analysis section utilises the classification provided by stakeholders in the Methodology chapter in terms of supply and demand. This involves arranging the four themes into which the data was organised within each stakeholder group, as takes place in the findings section.

5.6.1 Theme One: Context specific attributes

The issues raised in relation to the Saudi experience are both directly and indirectly associated with education. Specific aspects thought to have an indirect relationship with education influenced stakeholders' conceptualisation of reputation. This theme primarily focuses on the distinguishing characteristics of the Saudi Arabian context relative to the first research question (i.e. What are the distinctive characteristics of Saudi Arabian business schools and the Saudi Arabian HE sector?).

Interviewees from the different stakeholder groups focussed on the significance of religion in a number of different ways. From the demand side stakeholders, students placed limited significance on the religious dimension when seeking employment, showing willingness to avoid religious guidance in the workplace. But expressing the opinion from the supply side, one senior academic insisted on the embeddedness of religious values in all aspects of life, outlining the critical view that is present in teaching and religion when speaking about

teaching religion as an intensive subject, and the apparent lesser adherence to religious ethical values as a consequence, which he opined denoted a weakness in teaching methods and approaches.

Similar to the issue of religion, a discussion of culture emerged in interviews held with both supply and demand stakeholders. Hence, the specific aspect of culture each group discussed varied. When discussing his daughters' choices, a parent from the demand side observed that girls are restricted by the influence of their families and the result is a lessening of their options in terms of choice of area of study and/or location, which also informs those factors leading to the uptake of a postgraduate degree. Two interviewees from the supply side: an employer and a policy maker referred to culture when explaining underestimations of the importance of business and management. A further angle discussed from the supply side related to the relationship between universities and society, highlighting how culture can create a barrier from a university or societal perspective. All the interviewees quoted agreed that culture is an important aspect with multiple dimensions, all of which have a potential impact on choice of study area; this highlights the importance of evaluating cultural factors when reviewing the HE environment in Saudi Arabia in terms of gender related factors.

Also relating to cultural issues, the supply side interviews referred to the classification of business and management studies, explaining how they have become an aspect of the Natural Sciences or Humanities [Social Sciences]. This is significant due to the classification of high school qualifications, whereby students must choose between either the Sciences or the Humanities. This classification process establishes eligibility to study certain disciplines at

university level. Interestingly, one policy maker suggested that classifying business studies in the realm of social sciences devalues it, while another policy maker and senior academic opined that business and management are naturally aligned with the social sciences. The first view is reflected in the admissions policy, which affords only limited access to humanities students wishing to attend business schools.

5.6.1.1 Ministry of HE

In this thesis' findings, it is unsurprising that the only groups to discuss the relationship between the universities and the Ministry were policy makers and senior academics, as they have the most experience of this relationship.

Both groups agreed that governance, as it is usually exercised by the ministry is ordinarily restrictive. They went into some detail concerning this, citing features such as the lengthy approval process for project funding, as observed by members of the policy makers' group. A senior executive at one university commented that universities have the right to forge relationships with whomever they wish, but, that in practice, they usually do so in communication with the Ministry. However, approaches to local governmental agencies are made without referring to the Ministry. One interviewee claimed that the government implicitly acknowledges the current model of governance has many limitations. Thus, its new flagship university, KAUST, was established free from the ministry's control (KAUST, 2016).

Indeed, almost all the participants from the policy makers' group spoke about the aspect of funding as a concern. They acknowledged the government's funding role and insisted on the importance of the financial independence of the university. To exemplify this, one comment related to the role of the university's top leader (i.e. Chancellor) in attaining funding from outside Saudi Arabia.

Although, funding and the restricted nature of governance were not of interest to the other stakeholder groups, the interviewees from the most senior groups identified them as crucial.

5.6.1.2 Ministry of Labour

One policy maker mentioned the university's relationship with the Ministry of Labour, although this was beyond the scope of the current research. The interviewee indicated that there is a need for improved coordination between the universities and other government agencies. The importance of this single input is that it highlights the potential conflict between universities and business schools and the role of other institutions in this.

5.6.1.3 Education mission

Another aspect that is directly related to the local context of Saudi Arabia is the country's Education mission; within which the flagship programme aims to develop Saudi Arabian HE (MOE, 2015c). Although this area of discussion had not been anticipated previously, it arose as a topic of discussion in two interviews, i.e. with a student and a policy maker. They differed in their views; specifically, the student referred to seeking eligibility to gain a scholarship, while the policy maker expressed a wider view in relation to the admission of

business and management students to postgraduate degrees in general, noting that it was easy to admit them to world class universities. The student view stated the clear preference that universities abroad are more attractive and better quality than local ones, while the policy maker claimed local graduates are comparable in quality, knowledge, and skills to those of world class universities.

5.6.2 Theme Two: Reputation as ‘Generalised Favourability’ or ‘Being Generally known’

As mentioned earlier, the dimension of reputation ‘Being generally known’ is linked to ‘Generalised favourability’(Lange et al., 2011). A key feature of this is that it does not entail an independent judgment of the university or the business school by a stakeholder. This was further highlighted when discussing the second dimension (i.e. ‘Being Known for Something’), led to comparisons being made between different institutions. In many instances, the interviewees compared or ranked their university preferences without providing specific details. Other aspects discussed under this theme included: ranking, accreditation, age of the university, and its geographic location. All these are listed below. For example, a student only referred to other peoples’ views when claiming some universities are better than others. The attributes in this theme include: comparison, ranking, accreditation, and the age of the university.

In the interviews, the areas in which comparisons took place resulted in a variety of comparisons at different levels; i.e. the higher levels led to comparisons between local and international universities. Typically, comparisons at this level simply referred to international

universities as superior, without any specific identification with a single university or country. At another level, the most common comparison was those made between local universities, which (as expected), confirmed that some universities are more prestigious.

Overall, in all instances in which a comparison took place, international universities were perceived as superior to local ones, and Medicine and Engineering were viewed as superior to Business and Management. More specifically, and to a lower level (i.e. the school level rather than the university or country level), one policy maker compared business schools graduates to their peers, claiming they are less able to meet national needs and that any increase in their numbers might result in chaos. Similarly, regarding students' level on graduation, an interviewee from the demand side (an employer), cited that international universities are perceived as better than local ones. A non-specific comparison was made detailing the trend toward devaluing business and management studies at all levels; i.e. country, university, and school or department.

A further aspect, also within the dimension of 'Being known' related to the perceived usefulness of rankings. Indeed, the interviews revealed a number of diverse opinions concerning the legitimacy of the ranking process, while the level of engagement and interest in ranking varied between different stakeholder groups. Supply side interviewees held different opinions as the policy maker indicated ranking debates are not on the agenda of the Ministry; while another acknowledged local attention towards media ranking poses additional challenges to universities themselves. Similarly, the demand side shows both positive and negative attitudes towards ranking. This was evident when an employer was asked about the

criteria they would use to select the best candidate for a post, he said ‘ranking’. However, a student interviewee placed less weight on the rankings given in the Saudi Arabian context.

Similar to ranking, accreditation was discussed as of importance by some, but not all, of the stakeholders. In the current thesis, accreditation an aspect of the ‘Being Known’ dimension of reputation. Thus, it does not entail stakeholders’ own judgment or evaluation, but is dependent on external measures. Discussions about accreditation in the interviews took place in reference to local and international accreditation. The views of the interviewees regarding local accreditation were demonstrated by the interviewee from the demand side through the employers’ stakeholder group, which asserted that local accreditation is significant as a tool for legitimising the employment of graduates from international universities. By contrast, from the supply side a senior academic critiqued local accreditation, pointing out the dependence of the accreditation committee on the Ministry, leading to a possible conflict of interest. International accreditation was viewed as important by supply side stakeholders, and one decision maker asserted that it added value to local universities.

As discussed previously, the age of a University and its geographical location arose as an issue in the three interviews with different stakeholder groups from both supply and demand sides, in relation to both local and overseas universities. Closer geographical location was perceived as a preference but a willingness to travel to a ‘better’ remote university was mostly perceived as a justified decision by both supply and demand stakeholders. In a similar issue, the university age always preferred older universities and linked lower performance to newly established ones.

5.6.3 Theme three: Reputation as ‘Being Known for Something’ in the light of the three missions

The second dimension of reputation conceptualised in this research concerns ‘Being known for Something’ (Lange et al., 2011). As discussed earlier in this chapter, this touches on aspects both related and unrelated to the three university’s missions (research, teaching, and social engagement).

5.6.3.1 Research

The first of the three missions to be analysed in this section was the ‘Research’ mission. It was discussed from both the supply and demand sides, but it was not raised in any of the employer interviews.

The discussion concerning research revealed that stakeholders have different stances; they all seemed to agree that changes are required to improve the research environment. From the supply side, the policy makers acknowledged a lack of research output, and discounted the benefits of research in the business and management field, instead encouraging students to study for PhDs in medicine and engineering instead. A senior academic mentioned that corporate support for research is generally limited to demonstrating social responsibility, and so there is minimal interest in the outcomes of the sponsored research. Additionally, the interviewees employed as teaching academics focussed on the scarcity of resources needed to undertake research; while on the demand side, stakeholder groups of students and family members focussed on the importance of global research ranking as a means to differentiate

between local universities. It was however acknowledged that local universities tend to undertake less research than their global peers, which significantly influences their rankings; that is a higher ranking is typically received because when emphasis is placed on research.

5.6.3.2 Teaching

The second mission and the most discussed aspect by the stakeholders is teaching. In the majority of the interviews, teaching was presented as the primary function of the Saudi Arabian universities' business schools. It was shown to be central to perceived quality, and proven to be the most discussed dimension. Discussions about teaching took place in relation to sub aspects including: teaching materials, the teacher, and teaching facilities, as detailed below.

Both supply and demand side interviewees associated the quality of teaching with the available teaching materials. They all acknowledged the importance of high quality teaching materials, although their views varied concerning what these entailed. For example, an employer spoke about the necessity to review curricular to make universities more appealing to target students. In another example, a policy maker linked the lower popularity of business and management courses to the use of old and outdated teaching materials. The use of English was discussed in many interviews, and by all stakeholder groups from both the supply and demand sides; they all agreed that English teaching materials are of a superior quality, meaning they are generally more up to date. Some interviewees commented that English language materials are less accessible (a student), and it was suggested that they should be used in parallel with Arabic sources (a policy maker).

Additionally, a further aspect related to teaching concerned the emphasis placed on challenging students to work harder to pass their courses, or achieve higher grades. The role of grades attained is worthy of attention, as a perceived high rate of good grades, could be instrumental in informing perceptions about reputation.

The preparatory year is also essential to the success of academic teaching in Saudi Arabia. The main objective of the preparatory year is to prepare students for university life, and to equip them with the required level of English to enable them to progress when engaged in programmes taught through the medium of English. The interviewees expressed several different views regarding the preparatory year from both the supply and demand sides. Simply, from the demand side a student acknowledged its importance but observed that if it was improperly handled then he would not benefit from it. In more detail, from the supply side, one policy maker indicated that the significance of the preparatory year required deeper evaluation. Similarly, the role and success of the Cooperative Programme was also questioned by the different stakeholder groups.

References to teachers were made in the interviews with stakeholders on both the supply and demand side. However, the teachers themselves did not view teaching quality as determining the quality of an institution. In interviews, the senior academics identified teachers as a significant aspect influencing events, in particular practitioner teachers. However, there is no requirement for practitioner teachers in Saudi Arabia, as restrictions prevent full time academics from being engaged in activities outside the university. The role and impact of teachers was also mentioned to extend beyond the university itself; however, from the

demand side, one employer interviewee opined that a successful manager is someone who has a teacher's capability to disseminate both knowledge and experience.

5.6.3.3 Society

The third university mission is its relationship with society. From the demand side, interviewees framed the relationship between society and universities through the lens of employment. They suggested that the relationship places onus on universities to supply graduates with the skills they require in the workplace. This view was shared by the parents of prospective students.

A key area of deficit noted by the majority of the employers interviewed (in relation to business schools specifically, rather than to universities in general) concerned the need for professional managers. Employers highlighted the lack of qualified managers in the workplace, citing the potential for business schools to fill this gap. It was further observed by employers that postgraduate level business and management degrees are deemed more valuable, partly because of the lack of availability of entry-level jobs.

A further area discussed in light of the relationship between universities and society concerned short courses; i.e. non-academic courses targeted at the wider population. The discussion took place between supply side stakeholders only. A number of different views were expressed regarding the issue of whether courses are beneficial, or of low value; these were aimed purely at obtaining publicity and a good reputation. In addition, one academic considered the distance learning programme known as 'Intisab' to be one of the more useful

developments, as it offered individuals from the wider population the opportunity to gain a degree, although the programme itself was criticised by some of the other interviewees as a waste of resources. They suggested it had only been developed to ease the difficulties associated with admissions.

Consultation projects are a further activity considered to facilitate engagement between universities and the surrounding community. These can either involve charging a fee, or can be offered free of charge. A policy maker who is also a Dean at a business school stressed the benefit of consultation projects as a form of engagement, while queries about monetary exchange for consulting project suggested engagement with society should generally be considered a voluntary activity. A change in the perception of the public regarding engagement in core activities might suggest a change in the intensity and quality of projects.

The relationship with the private sector was discussed in interviews mostly with supply side stakeholders as well. Each participant described the relationship differently. A senior consultant from the Ministry viewed the relationship from the perspective of employability, noting that the labour market welcomes educated candidates, regardless of their course of study. Reference was made to students from one agricultural college that proved popular with the banking industry, and the discussion focussed on the role of the university in advancing skills, including mentions of the significance of such skills.

A senior academic at a business school discussed the relationship in additional detail; observing that labour had been in high demand during the early days of the university, with the consequence that all graduates had been able to find employment. This demand rendered

any insistence by employers on specific requirements a luxury. However, the situation changed after several decades, due to an increase in the number of universities and the development of more specific job roles. The interviewee referenced career fairs as one of the most important aspects of the university-industry relationship, with the primary role of such fairs being to provide students with job opportunities, either post-graduation, or when embarking on cooperative programmes. A secondary role (which is now receiving additional attention) concerns the assessment of employers' needs and university outcomes. This resulted in the university forming working groups with employers to ensure appropriate curriculum development. A further aspect of this relationship related to the industrial valleys established within university campuses to accommodate companies' research and development departments, as well as to act as entrepreneurship incubators.

5.6.4 Theme Four: Reputation as 'Being Known for Something' beyond the three missions

As discussed previously, the dimension of 'Being Known for Something' is not limited to the university's three missions; for example, it also includes administrative and non-academic functions, which affect choices made about universities and business schools. Both supply and demand side stakeholder interviewees touched on these areas.

One of the aspects in this theme relates to university buildings, and licensing of institutes. From the supply side, a policy maker insisted that it is a mandatory requirement to license private HE institutes to have their own fully equipped education facilities. Speaking from the

demand side, a student claimed that the buildings themselves are of less importance than what the universities actually do.

Another aspect in this theme is associated with the university's bureaucracy and administration process. It arose only on the demand side when a student harshly critiqued the university's administration and admission process, and framed it as an indication of lower quality.

5.7 Business Schools Challenges

This section further extends the analysis to present aspects that arose during the interviews as challenges and/or issues to business schools that does not fall directly under the categorisation of reputation dimension. These challenges might serve as underlying barriers to the development of business schools' reputations in the Saudi Arabian context.

5.7.1 University or Business School

One of the key findings of the research relating to local context concerned the differentiation between the university and business school setting, whether stand-alone or a part of the university. During the data collection process, it was impossible to distinguish between universities and business schools at all levels. The fact that there are no stand-alone public business schools in Saudi Arabia played a role in this. All Saudi public business schools are part of larger universities. Many of the attributes of these business schools were inherited from the universities of which they were a part. The situation is similar in the domain of

private HE also. Two private universities were initially private business schools, and they have since expanded to become universities, offering a wider range of study disciplines within integrated business schools. Even in the private HE setting it would be accurate to say that business schools inherit key features from their universities (MOE, 2015c). The blending of universities and business schools was evident in the data when referring to universities rather than schools. One senior academic clearly indicated that the business school he was responsible for sometimes benefits from, and at other times suffers from being governed under the auspices of the university.

There is tension over whether autonomous business schools would be beneficial and guide students in a more vocational direction, or whether it would be favourable to allow them to benefit from the status associated with being part of a university (Evans, 2015). Certainly at present in Saudi Arabia there is no clear distinction between business schools and universities. It is the decision of individual business school's leaders to distinguish themselves as separate entities, or improve their reputations from within the university context. Certainly the option of remaining part of the university seems most feasible, as not all stakeholder groups acknowledge any clear distinction between business schools and the university environment.

5.7.2 Role of HE

The expectations from universities, in a number of stakeholder cases, made no direct mention of the role of the universities themselves. This was because stakeholders cited the local context, when discussing their expectations from a university. Expectations concerning the

roles of universities were elsewhere linked to reputation indicators, as laid out in the literature review. The interviewees who were invited to discuss the role of HE were from groups classified as supply side stakeholders (i.e. policy makers, senior academics, and teaching academics). One policy maker emphasised that one of the most valuable jobs of the university was in preparing attendees for employment, while a tenured academic expressed ambiguity with regard to the expectations from HE in Saudi Arabia.

Both views indicate a lack of clarity among stakeholders regarding the expectations from HE institutes in the local context.

5.7.3 Private HE

A university's relationship with the Ministry varies according to whether it is private or public. Public universities are part of, and dependent upon, the Ministry of Education, thus rendering the relationship both hierarchal and organisational. Private HE institutes, meanwhile, are independent bodies, bound by the regulations of the Ministry. Private HEs are emerging in the Saudi Arabian HE context (Jamjoom, 2012). Discussions concerning private HEs only arose with supply stakeholders in interviews with policy makers and senior academics who were generally in favour of public universities. They are suspicious of private universities, and consider them as in need of close monitoring to ensure the quality of the education delivered. Additionally, policy makers clarified that they consider such schools as alternatives only. It is therefore important to understand the reasons behind the choice of a private, rather than a public business school. Interestingly, when discussing their preferences, neither employers nor students discussed private HE as an alternative to public schools. The

questions in the interviews were formulated with the intention of understanding interviewees' preferences without naming specific institutes.

5.7.4 MBA

MBA programmes are generally known as 'jewels' among business school programmes. Their popularity is growing in Saudi Arabia, and they are offered by several public and private universities. At present there is no clear statistical evidence regarding growth in MBA programmes or their role, and current data does not involve a breakdown of study area. There is only a single figure available for postgraduates in business and management, and this only distinguishes between males and females, and levels, i.e. Masters or PhDs. Discussions about MBAs arose among supply side stakeholders conducted by academics and employers, and both indicated that the MBA has yet to fulfil its potential, either due to misunderstanding of the programme itself, or due to restrictive regulation.

There was some discussion about the function of media from supply side interviewees only. These discussions emerged when discussing rankings and the role of the media in promoting them, and when using media to enhance the university's ability to reach out to potential stakeholders' and prospective students.

The issue of multi-media was raised as a significant aspect of the relationship between universities and society. There was also a discussion of how universities and business schools approach their stakeholders in relation to media and communication, with two different practices identified by those universities whose members were interviewed. Firstly, students

can enrol in a discipline of their choice at the time of their admission to the university; they are then immediately assigned to a specific faculty. Secondly, students are not enrolled in a specific faculty, or college, of a university; instead they follow a preparatory year, during which they choose an area to concentrate on for the remainder of their studies.

5.7.5 Information technology

Information technology was discussed by two interviewees from different perspectives. In one case a parent made a general comment that IT use is important, while a senior academic pointed out that there has been a significant shift in attitudes towards using technology in learning. Colbran and Al-Ghreimil (2013) asserted that information technology is important as a means to improve the quality of Saudi universities. References to the importance of use of technology, either in teaching or in administrative activities indicates that it is an important consideration, although the researcher did not directly ask the interviewees about it directly. Both the interviewees seemed to agree there is more to be done to increase the utilisation of technology in both teaching and administrative activities.

5.8 Conclusion

As is apparent from the presentation of the findings in this chapter, several aspects relate directly to the Saudi Arabian context and this sets this research apart from previous studies. An important question posed concerns whether these aspects create a valid understanding in the field of business education in terms of the reputation of business schools in Saudi Arabia. The following chapter raises this point and establishes the validity of sensitivity to the

context in research, as well as presenting the views expressed regarding stakeholder reputation and inconsistencies. The stakeholders interviewed for this research highlighted different aspects based on their unique perspectives when presenting their understanding of how Saudi Arabia differs from other countries and such findings add to the distinctive character of this research.

Based on the points raised in this chapter, there appears to be adequate evidence to suggest that business and management education and management practices in Saudi Arabia have distinct features that vary from the other contexts (such as the UK and the US) discussed in the Literature Review chapter. Following distinctive characteristics of Saudi Arabia HE, the discussion around different dimensions of reputation posed insights into how different stakeholders' perceive reputation elements differently and how that might affect their choice and preference of what and where to study. The following chapter will indicate these differences through the lens of what stakeholders expect from business schools and, based on these insights, discusses potential opportunities for business schools to increase their reputation among stakeholders.

Chapter Six: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the interpretation and discussion of the findings presented in the previous chapter in relation to the research questions. First, the distinctive characteristics of Saudi Arabian business schools and HE are discussed in light of the first research question. These characteristics are viewed through societal and organisational lenses. Second, to address the second research question and associated sub questions, how reputation is constructed in the minds of stakeholders on the basis of expectations formed in business schools, through either specific or non-specific elements as indicated by the findings and presented in the literature review (Fombrun, 2012) will be discussed. There will be some emphasis made on understanding how stakeholders differ in terms of constructing business schools' reputations and the possible reasons behind these differences. The potential implications of a school's reputation on business schools' strategies will then be discussed. After that, the opportunities for business schools to increase their reputation will be discussed to indicate where business schools can move forward.

To reiterate, the questions posed in this research are:

RQ1. What are the distinctive characteristics of Saudi Arabian business schools and the Saudi Arabian HE sector?

RQ2. How do a range of key stakeholders view business education and business schools in Saudi Arabia?

- What do stakeholders expect from business schools in Saudi Arabia?
- How do stakeholders use reputation to evaluate business schools and universities in Saudi Arabia?
- What reputational factors have a potential impact on business schools' strategies?

6.2 The distinctive characteristics of Saudi HE

The distinctive characteristics of HE in the Saudi Arabian context can be viewed through either societal or institutional lenses. Both highlight significant differences distinguishing the conceptualisation of reputation in Saudi Arabia as being arguably different from how it is presented in previous studies on business schools' reputation (specifically in contrast with Rindova et al. (2005); Boyd et al. (2009); Gioia and Corley (2002); Safón (2009); Pfeffer and Fong (2002); Bennis and O'Toole (2005) and Mintzberg (2004)).

This section of the discussion considers the left side of the conceptual framework, which looked for Saudi Arabian contextual factors. It offers a discussion about distinctive Saudi characteristics pertinent to both the societal and HE settings. It then moves on to discuss recent developments and assess the position of Saudi Arabian business schools from critiques of business schools given in the literature.

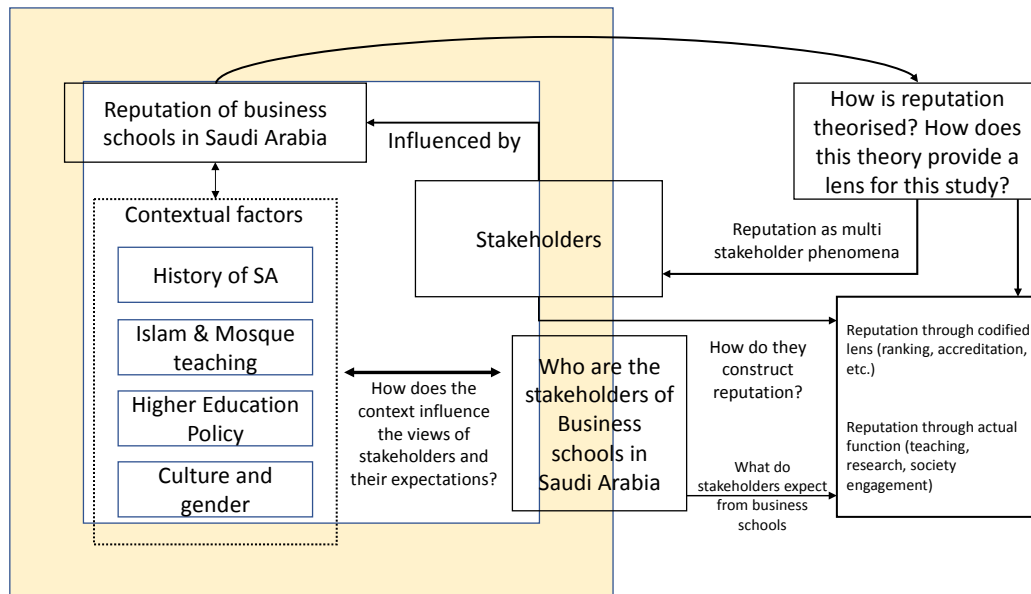


Figure 15 Conceptual Framework, left side

First, through the societal lens, the role of religion is considered as a vital component of the Saudi Arabian educational system, as all aspects of the school environment must comply with religious guidance (AlHamid et al., 2007). Furthermore, ethical values are closely related to, and considered interchangeable with, religious values (AlHamid et al., 2007, AlEsá, 2009).

Islam is a religion that encourages knowledge and learning and does not place any limitations on engagement in business and management studies (AlHamid et al., 2007, Kadi, 2006).

Therefore, its role is not specific to business schools but to multiple areas of study. Currently, the relationship between business schools and religious values can be seen as being linked across two spheres: business ethics, and Islamic finance. The religious dimension remains central within Saudi society; however, the younger generation is typically more open than previous ones in terms of attitude towards choice with regard to religious restrictions. As an

in-depth investigation to assess the complexities of ethical/religious values was considered to be beyond the scope of the current research it was accepted that Islamic values perceive ethics and ethical behaviour as vital components of religious practice.

Ethics, as a practice associated with human behaviour, is the subject of several studies in relation to business and management. A seminal study by Ghoshal (2005) reviewed key relationships between business schools and references made to immoral business activities, suggesting that business schools can be blamed for the immoral activities that take place in the business world.

Some of the interviewees consulted in this research expressed strong views about religious values and ethics, using the terms interchangeably. The significance of ethics in the Saudi context came across differently in the interviews than presented in studies such as Ghoshal (2005). For example, from supply side stakeholders, an academic [SA6] asserted that it is vital to include a spiritual (Islamic) element when designing and delivering business and management courses, to encourage ethical business behaviour. He considered the opportunity to do so to be an advantage unique to Islamic society. His view not only emphasised the potential for using religious guidance in business education, but also indicated the strong influence of religion within society. His perception is that religious links comprise the competitive advantage that Saudi business schools would have over their counterparts in the UK and US.

Another senior academic [SA1] from the supply side of stakeholders critiqued the way that religious courses are taught in schools and universities, commenting that the assumption

should be that the intended outcome when teaching religion is to promote personal morality, as well as business ethics. However, despite critiques of the outcomes of religious teachings, references to religion underlined the assumption that ethics are linked to religion and are a relevant component of business practice.

Business schools in Saudi Arabia can be distinguished by the way they use religious references when promoting business ethics. Religious references in Islamic finance provide a broad area of research and discussion (Kasmo et al., 2015), although they were not specifically included in the interview guide and were not raised by interviewees. The majority of local banking operations are in compliance with Islamic finance restrictions (Mustafa, 2006) and such a framework could benefit the curriculums of business schools in the area of ethics.

Interestingly, the employers group did not discuss the role of religion; instead they focused on education and business topics.

A further aspect that falls under the context specific theme is that of cultural change. This has proven to be a rich area for research and debate among local scholars (Bjerke and AlMeer, 1993) as well as international ones (Mellahi and Wbod, 2001). The interview questions posed by this research did not call for an explicit examination of either religion or culture. The discussions concerning society resulted from the expression of a number of thoughts on culture and its relationship with the teaching of Business and Management.

A key aspect of the cultural atmosphere concerns the issue of gender, including the different choices and opportunities available in the context of HE. Aside from societal barriers that dictate that some areas of study are available to only males and others only to females, the options for areas of study also differ between universities.

Viewed through the societal lens, it was apparent that gender issues remain a sensitive area of discussion. In spite of the official initiatives to increase the level of engagement of females in more activities and the shift in social acceptance towards greater engagement by females in the workplace (as seen by the appointment of a female member to The Shura Council (Statutory Council) for the first time in 2013 (Shura, 2016a, Shura, 2016b) and increases in female employment rates (GAS, 2015), the current intention is to increase and expand segregated female HE institutes (Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013). One parent interviewee talked about the fact that the choices available to his daughter and his son remain different, signalling the continuing sensitivity surrounding female education.

When places of study and work places are segregated, this makes any research relevant only to the context in which it was produced. Studies examining aspects of female education in Saudi Arabia have previously acknowledged the scarcity and unavailability of evidence for reference (Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013). As with much of the previous research, this research should be considered to be applicable only to business schools attended by men. Although some discussions arose relating to female education in comments made by parents and academics, they are not sufficient to build a clear picture of the situation regarding female education. Given the social environment in Saudi Arabia, there is simply not enough data to

posit that the issues identified in this research are applicable to female business and management students and/or practitioners. In fact, the majority of female workers is engaged in the health and education sectors (MOCI, 2016, and GAS, 2015) and any data available on female workers is related to these sectors. Thus, the researcher argues that females engaged in the business field would expect to encounter a totally different set of issues than men working in the same field. The challenges to engagement in the business environment are likely to influence the willingness of females to choose to embark upon a course of study in business and management. As mentioned previously, the data suggested a less favourable attitude towards business and management among male students and a clear preference towards engineering and medicine. A similar picture might be expected to emerge when comparing business and management to medicine among female students, as work opportunities for women are most obvious in the health service. Recent developments in work regulations (MOL, 2016) might make it more appealing for females to work in business related fields. Undoubtedly, however, female empowerment in the work place is not keeping pace with female educational opportunities.

Following the discussion of aspects related to the local context from the societal lens above, some other aspects were seen through the institutional lens. The most salient of these factors relates to the governance and funding of HE institutes. It has been asserted that autonomy is vital to universities; in particular, that they should take responsibility for managing any necessary changes (Noorda and Howard, 2011). At present, universities in Saudi Arabia do not yet enjoy full autonomy, as mentioned in the interviews. Consequently, universities lack

distinctiveness because all universities function under the same centralised governance scheme put forward by the Ministry (Al Eisa and Smith, 2013).

The interviewees spoke about the relationship between the universities and the Ministry of HE in a number of different ways. The interviewees (including those who were members of staff or in one case Dean of a business school) presented the relationship as being relevant at the level of the university, rather than at the school or college level. References were made to the Ministry, or to the university under discussion, when discussing a number of different issues, including: (1) control, (2) support, (3) limitations, and (4) trust. In addition, the emergent relationship was discussed from a number of different perspectives. Some university personnel viewed the Ministry's control and governance policy in a negative manner, claiming that it placed limitations on the university's development plans.

The arguments made by policy makers at the Ministry [SA4.2] and by academics employed at business schools [TA1] contradict each other; Ministry officials perceive policy as being a form of quality protection, whereas academics perceive it to be restrictive. There is some scope for universities to develop and innovate within the policy framework, but it certainly also has restrictive aspects.

The discussion concerning governance is closely related to HE funding as the funding and financing of HE is still considered to be the responsibility of government [SA2]. The Ministry of Education is both the governing and the funding body; however, some universities have now begun to arrange alternative funding plans, primarily through endowment projects (Alharthi, 2014a). It is possible that funding structures and allocations

might evolve over the coming years, but at present there are no clear indications of any significant plans to change funding responsibility and handling.

The possibility of attaining a good reputation while navigating policy requirements is demonstrated by the exceptional achievement record of Umm Al-Qura University. It gained this distinction through initiatives to enhance entrepreneurship and innovation. The university recently completed five years of entrepreneurship initiatives and has seen a significant growth in entrepreneurial and innovative products, with an increase in the number of patent registration disclosures from zero in 2010 to 1150 in 2015 (WadiMakkah, 2016). It is thought that the initiatives it has implemented required navigation around several policy and regulatory procedures. There is, however, no documentation showing the processes by which the institution realised its achievements. This author hypothesises that the details of the process of manoeuvring through Ministry policies and regulations to achieve this success would prove as interesting to the researcher as the success itself.

An institutional lens can also be applied to the employment and labour market situation in the country. Central government run employment processes do not place significant emphasis on the differences between universities and this minimises the importance of those factors that distinguish universities and fields of study; for example, some jobs suggest that any degree in the humanities is an acceptable pre-requisite and a recent announcement by the Ministry of Civil Services asked for a 'university certificate' to apply for an administrative role in government without specifying the field of study (MCS, 2016a). Recruitment in the public sector is centralised and, when official procedures are followed, the role of the recruiting

institution is minimal. Therefore, employers from the public sector are unable to state their preference for applicants from a particular universities during the recruitment process.

Some student respondents, e.g. [SS1], expressed a preference to work in the public sector, with no mention of a specific department. This preference was justified by the assumption that they will benefit from better job security in a public post, although it is unlikely that this will continue to be the case in the long term. There are many adjustments being made to policies and regulations that are expected to bring about change in this regard. The most essential concerns the development and improvement of Saudisation policy which encourages and, at times, compels private sector companies to employ Saudi citizens rather than expatriates (MOL, 2016). In one of the few academic articles about the Saudi employment market, it was clearly suggested there is a need for a holistic plan rather than policies (AlAsfour and Khan, 2014). Both policy changes and calls for the reformation of the labour market justify the assumption that the importance of business schools will increase as available jobs change. At present, the situation is not especially appealing for business graduates who have relatively few less specialised opportunities available to them along with employers' preference for recruiting experienced managers [SE4]. However, following the reform, there will most likely be a call for the professionalisation of business practices and a specific demand for business students. In this case, business schools would then have the chance to participate in restructuring the labour market and contributing to society by devising and executing restructuring plans.

Both the societal and the institutional lens suggest the need to attribute greater importance to the role of business schools within the local economy and emphasise the difference between the Saudi local environment the US and UK contexts.

6.2.1 Ongoing HE development

Over the last two decades, development has been a key characteristic of HE in Saudi Arabia. Official development figures were presented in the literature review, but development was also discussed by interviewees from a number of different stakeholder groups, sometimes overlapping with discussions concerning expectations of universities.

The HE sector in Saudi Arabia has been undergoing structural development since the early 2000s. The growing number of universities, education missions and the recent merger between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of HE, are features of these changes (SPA, 2016).

Following the expansion of HE institutes and the increased number of universities, the differences between institutions should be transparent if they are to effectively target stakeholders. The intention behind the expansion is to overcome geographical barriers to HE by distributing new universities across the country, rather than only in cities where old universities are already established (MOE, 2015c). This is why the majority of new universities are in cities that did not previously have a university. Some of these were originally set up as branches of larger universities.

A further subject discussed among subjects related to Saudi Arabian HE was the relationship between these universities. This subject had not been previously suggested in the interview guide, nor had it been highlighted by the interviewer, but arose during discussions relating to the choice of university. This discussion focussed on the issue of new universities. As previously discussed, the number of universities increased in early 2000, both through the establishment of new universities and through the branching out of existing universities. The latter maintained a relationship with the mother university, inheriting its standards and quality measures. The parent of a prospective student mentioned this aspect [SF1], noting that newly established universities could perhaps work in partnership with their mother university and receive assistance with the day-to-day running.

Currently, the accreditation process for university degrees is in line with the Ministry's aim to ensure effective standardisation. As a consultant working in the NCAAA pointed out, accreditation aims to ensure that the tremendous investment in HE is supported by high quality teaching. One senior academic [SA1] interviewee critiqued the public universities for imitating one another too closely and recommended that each try to distinguish itself from the others. A potential to improve new universities' reputations lies in affiliation with existing universities (Naidoo and Pringle, 2014). New universities could increase their reputation and attractiveness using several means [SA2]. They should also consider local accreditation as a foundation to be built upon, not an achievement in itself. This would then prompt them to consider their affiliation with older and more established universities as well. Geographical distribution can be used to support additional factors linked to reputation beyond geographical proximity.

This is reflected in stakeholders' references to accreditation being awarded from the Ministry rather than from the 'independent committee', which appeared to be less well-known than (or indistinguishable from) the Ministry.

Due to the fact that the education mission is one of the aspects drawing attention to HE development in SA. Its impact has not yet been researched and recognised. Academics in the field of HE are currently using their experience to forecast this impact as reported in this research by supply side stakeholders [SA4].

A new update published by the Ministry to the national HE development plan, AFAQ, stated that workshops are being held with different stakeholders to manage the continuation of the plan. The director of the plan clearly stated that the first five-year period (i.e. 2010-2015) would concentrate extensively on the expansion of the HE system that is referred to as an ultimate priority, due to increasing demand. However, the second phase (2016-2020) would then place additional focus on integration with different stakeholders and on fulfilling the requirements for national development, along with (as noted by the director of the programme) a focus on the global competitiveness of the Saudi HE sector (MOE, 2016d). This update is in line with this research call for increased attention to stakeholders' needs and differences.

6.2.2 Are Saudi business schools under fire?

Criticism of business schools and business education following events such as the financial crises, and the Enron and WorldCom scandals (Ghoshal, 2005, Parmar et al., 2010) have

resulted in business schools coming under fire although these events had a limited impact on Saudi Arabian business schools, as seen in the literature review chapter. To the best of this researcher's knowledge, there have been no instances of business schools being linked to negative or unethical practices by business practitioners in any interviews or in any known publications in the Saudi Arabian context.

As noted by a policy maker interviewee, Saudi Arabian business schools have followed the American model of business schools [SA2]. Thus, the influence of business schools on business practice in Saudi Arabia would be expected to be similar to that described in the American context, as discussed by Ghoshal (2005) and Pfeffer and Fong (2002). However, somewhat surprisingly, there have been no critiques of business ethics in the Saudi context as there have been in the American context. A possible reason for this is that the business environment and market structure are fundamentally different in Saudi Arabia. As discussed in the literature review, employment is mostly concentrated within the public sector (GAS, 2015). Public sector based jobs offer less flexibility to individuals, as the bureaucracy in place is constricting, and business processes are highly structured, as noted by employers in semi-governmental institutes [SE1]. This view could also be supported by observing that universities encounter a high level of bureaucracy because they are controlled by the Ministry, similar to other public organisations. In addition, the influence of business schools is limited. This influence is only apparent through the management profession or when graduates become managers (Paton et al., 2013).

Management as a profession does not enjoy unique popularity, since management practitioners are not necessarily trained as professional managers. For example, promotion to a managerial position in most government organisations is based on seniority rather than qualification (MCS, 2016b). This gives rise to prolonged debates around management and leadership. Different practices and debates centre on the question: Are managers/leaders born or made? (Avolio, 2005, Goleman, 2003) and on the practice of many public organisations to regard seniority as the first criterion for nomination to leadership positions, as confirmed by the employer interviewees. The prioritisation of seniority represents a clear deviation from the ethos of professionalising management practice. Professional managers are not always recognised as having better potential capabilities than those equipped with business know-how and vocational capabilities (Mintzberg, 2004). Moreover, there is no obvious discussion of operational level management practices around the topic of the need for specially trained managers in Saudi Arabia. The institute of public administration, which provides on-the-job training for public sector employees, has no clear links with business schools, and it is not transparent about how it deals with management as a profession (IPA, 2016).

Despite the criticisms presented, business schools arguably do contribute to professionalising and improving the practices of management (Hay and Hodgkinson, 2008). The current recruitment and promotion process in Saudi Arabia does not acknowledge that business and management graduates could succeed better in management-related jobs. As stated by an interviewee [SA4.3], agriculture graduates are often recruited into the banking industry and promotions in the public sector are usually based on seniority rather than specialisation [SE4].

6.3 Expectations of business schools

This section of the discussion chapter seeks to answer the second research question and associated sub questions directly. To reiterate, the second research questions for this thesis is:

RQ2. How do a range of key stakeholders view business education and business schools in Saudi Arabia?

- What do stakeholders expect from business schools in Saudi Arabia?
- How do stakeholders use reputation to evaluate business schools and universities in Saudi Arabia?
- What reputational factors have a potential impact on business schools' strategies?

The research question is answered by assessing how reputation is constructed in the minds of stakeholders, by presenting their expectations of business schools (first sub question). The stakeholders' expectations were expressed in the findings chapter as aspects that currently exist in the interviewees' own contexts and which are known to the interviewees to exist and be appreciated at other universities as on the right side of this research conceptual framework.

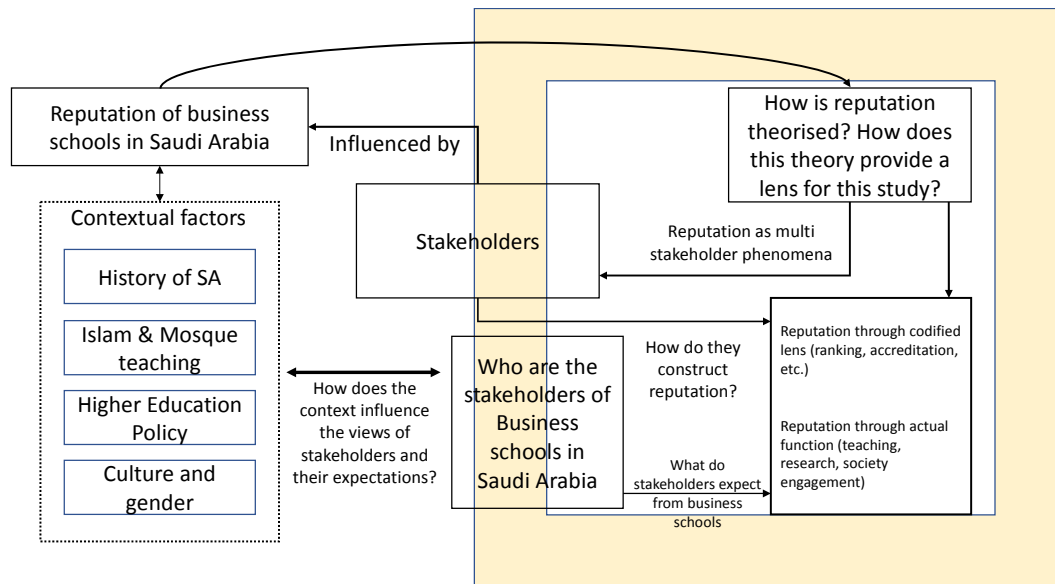


Figure 16 Conceptual Framework, right side

The processes of comparison and attaining a better position than rivals in the same industry is key to building an enhanced reputation (Fombrun, 2012).

Discussions around the reputation of business schools in the minds of stakeholders were continued when discussing the preference of choice and of stakeholders to engage with or avoid relationships with business schools. The issue of choice is built around expectations of business schools in terms of functional areas, e.g. teaching, engaging with society, and administration, as well as non-specific aspects of reputation, e.g. ranking and accreditation. The attractiveness of a university is associated with its reputation among both internal and external stakeholders (Steiner et al., 2012). When it has a good reputation, it becomes possible for a university to attract higher quality students and staff, to attract more funding and to guarantee better employability rates for its graduates.

The expectations of business schools set the tone for stakeholders' discussions about business schools and universities. The reputation of business schools from the stakeholders' perspective is linked to the stakeholders' expectations of the schools. Stakeholders can see a contribution as somehow being related to what they were expecting from the business schools (Fombrun, 2012).

These expectations are manifested either through universities' core functions (teaching, research, society engagement) or through other preferential measures, such as employability (Safón, 2009). One of the benefits of a study on business schools' reputation is that it helps create a better understanding of the mechanism of the stakeholders' choice of business schools and universities. Studies show that business schools with a better reputation are more popular with students and employers (Rindova et al., 2005, Safón, 2009 and, Policano, 2007) and academic staff (Turban, 2001).

A rare study looked at the quality of Saudi business schools and the building of a reputation through innovation, an updated curriculum, community involvement and good administration. It considered only the views of current students when assessing reputation (Sadiq Sohail and Shaikh, 2004). This study proposed a similar classification for the elements contributing to reputation but looked at the broader stakeholder group, placing more emphasis on assessing reputation in depth.

The advantages that business schools can offer to each stakeholder group are apparently ambiguous to the stakeholders themselves. The expectations of business schools were discussed by clustering stakeholders into two groups: the supply and the demand stakeholder

group. The supply stakeholder group included: policy makers, senior academics, and teaching academics. The demand group consisted of employers, students, and their families. Both groups' expectation indicators are discussed below.

A number of scholars have considered the roles of HE and business schools when seeking to address the tension between teaching, research, professional management and other issues (Khurana, 2007, Willmott, 1994). As stated previously in the literature review, the view of the role of HE in Saudi Arabia is that its key aim should be to deliver a qualified workforce capable of contributing to the country's growth (AlHamid et al., 2007). The stakeholders were found to both agree with, and contradict, this popular understanding. In particular, stakeholders tended to frame HE institutes more broadly, through the lens of their expectations of them.

6.3.1 Supply stakeholders

Expectation from supply stakeholders vary from being toward the entire HE scene in SA to some very specific aspects. Senior academics and policy makers within the Ministry were expected to enjoy a bird's eye view of the entire HE sector, but the findings obtained suggest that their view is, in fact, rather limited. They explicitly refer to the lack of studies and research in areas linked to business schools and business education within the Ministry [SA4.1].

6.3.1.1 Context

The discussion of the role of the university head in Saudi Arabia and the fact that, as pointed out by a senior academic [SA5], they are not required to seek funding, indicates a similar situation in terms of research funding, as university heads are mainly concerned with academic affairs rather than with looking for funds to run their universities. However, there is a threat that a research project might be less critical of the government, as this is the dominant funding body. A similar concern was raised by a senior academic [SA1] who argued that academics in a leading position (e.g. the Dean and Vice Chancellors) are reluctant to object to policies issued by the Ministry, as they are appointed by the Ministry.

A senior consultant in the Ministry also mentioned that competition and comparison between universities are not on the Ministry's agenda, as all universities are assumed to be equal and are treated equally [SA4.1]. This assumption was implicitly contradicted in the same interview by another consultant, who stated that three universities are meant to be research-led rather than teaching-led [SA4.2]. However, the comparison and competition between universities does not necessarily indicate unfair treatment from the Ministry. It is expected that universities should be able to identify their own strengths and unique features so that they can upgrade themselves.

6.3.1.2 University key roles

The evidence collected suggests that the general understanding among respondents is that the sole purpose of gaining a degree and graduating from a university is to get a job. Although this goal can be justified by stakeholders other than academics, it appears to challenge the

role of universities as knowledge promoters if academics are discussing job opportunities and career prospects as being their main concern. The transition to university is seen by senior academics as being a means to acquire new skills and ability. A study by Dias and Sá (2012) confirmed that students perceive moving to university as a challenge and a required step in order to improve their competencies.

The discussion of excellence in teaching materials and teaching methods focused on the use of English as a medium of study and the use of English books. The English books are textbooks used by leading business schools in the US, as explained by a senior academic [SA2]. There is adequate evidence from interviews and accreditation records that aligning teaching materials of Saudi Business Schools with those of leading business schools in the US is beneficial. Several different reasons justify this alignment. One academic referred to the richness of the case studies included in such materials [SA4]. Another suggested that the science of business (i.e. marketing) originated in the US and therefore teaching materials should be brought from the US. From these discussions, it emerged that alliances with leading U.S business schools are beneficial but might not prevail long term due to the different context. Any alliance with overseas business schools and the use of their materials, methods, and techniques should take place only with sensitivity to local environments. There are some advantages to developing courses locally, however, as one academic explained [SA6]. The first of these is the option to examine best practices used in Saudi Arabia. Another is to be able to move between adapting US practices to the Saudi environment and changing Saudi practices to match US practices.

During discussions conducted for this research, the issue of usability and quality of teaching materials arose and a proposal was made to create material based on local case studies. The development of case studies requires effort and resources, as pointed out by a senior academic [SA2]. Thus, the development of local case studies featuring the relationship with businesses and practical outcomes would consequently improve reputation. This view is supported by an employer [SE1], who appreciates being approached by universities to enquire about market requirements.

Central to teaching success is the role of the teacher, especially practitioner teachers. The policies implemented for teaching and academic staff in universities and business schools appear to require some updating. The current published policy issued by the Ministry applies to all universities across all disciplines. Private HE settings implement more restrictive policies for the recruitment of academic staff than public universities. In particular, private HE institutes are not permitted to benefit from business practitioners teaching part time [SA4.1]; meanwhile, practitioners teaching in public universities are not well paid [TA3]. Arguably, there is a correlation between the decision to relax the recruiting and assignment criteria imposed on academic teaching staff and the quality of their teaching. The policy, as it is currently applied, can be viewed as being more conservative and less risk-oriented. However, potential teaching candidates are disqualified from offering their expertise by the current policy even when they are academically qualified with PhD degrees from leading global universities, because they have full time jobs elsewhere. It is likely that the use of practitioners in the teaching context would deliver positive results for business schools,

benefitting all stakeholders. The ability to recruit practitioners would both save resources and add a broader perspective to the teaching process.

The current situation and regulations do not motivate practitioner teachers to teach in universities and business schools. For example, as noted in the findings above, practitioner teachers are considered in some countries as a legitimate resource in a business school context, as argued by a senior academic [SA6]. For this, a policy change would be necessary. Some interviewees also mentioned the possible advantages of employing senior academic consultants [SA4.1, 2, 3]. Undoubtedly, the way an issue is described indicates how it is perceived in relation to an institution's reputation.

One of the potentialities offered by academic employment is the opportunity to engage in research activity and be published in a refereed journal through bridging research-practice gap. As there are far fewer publications in the business and management field than in, for example the fields of medicine and engineering (SCIMAGOJR, 2016), it is worth investigating the research environment in business schools in contrast with other departments in Saudi universities to establish how this relates to reputation. The difference in the number of publications was highlighted by an academic interviewee [SA4.2], who linked it to the quality of the admitted students relative to those admitted to engineering and medicine schools. He asserted that some of the lower performing students admitted to business schools in the 1980s were now academics who underperform in the research aspect. Although this explanation might have a solid foundation, it is not necessarily the principal factor at work. In

reality, the main evidence raised by this interviewee is that business schools are perceived to have a lesser reputation because they employ less qualified academics.

Interestingly, a senior academic [SA3], agreed that some teaching academics in business schools accept the idea that the status of their schools is lower than universities and so treated their students accordingly. This indicates the lack of awareness of the importance, and the potential contribution, of business schools to the economy. This Suggests that the interviewee believes that business schools and their graduates are unlikely to make the same level of contribution to the economy as other, more established, disciplines. The importance of this quotation arises not only from its clarity of expression, but also from the position of the interviewee as a senior consultant to the Ministry of Education.

6.3.1.3 The extended potential

Academics in business schools also demonstrated some ambiguity over what they felt they could offer to their students and society beyond their classrooms [TA2]. One of the expectations raised by an academic was that the schools should provide an umbrella under which to legalise academics' work as consultants beyond their teaching duties [TA3], which appears to suggest more personal benefit to those staff members than to the school or its students.

Staff members' participation in public seminars and non-academic publications could also be considered very useful. However, members of staff might not be backed by their universities when working on non- academic publications [SA2]. Contributions to non-academic

publications can be seen as an effective form of societal engagement for several reasons. First, it increases the visibility of the university within the public domain. Second, it provides valuable knowledge to society in an easy and accessible way. The work conducted by academics was seen to be beneficial to the university, as stated by a senior academic [SA2], who asserted that it could also increase the status of the university.

The culture of the university and the business school plays a role in the practices that influence their reputations. These practices might be concealed at times and so not directly recognised as being an influential factor. A clear example that emerges from the findings relates to challenges in teaching. These were clearly perceived as an element contributing to reputation and also clearly associated with the organisational culture that enforces them (Clayson et al., 2006).

Expectations from supply stakeholders reflect their roles. They show more attention to topics of governance, funding, research than demand stakeholders. Their expectations also went beyond the personal benefit to those of the whole HE sector in the country. Furthermore, their expectations were in cases limited to their experience and did not reflect the expected bird's eye view anticipated from their roles.

6.3.2 Demand stakeholders

Overall, demand stakeholders (i.e. students, parents, and employers) revealed less awareness about the deliverables they expected the school to have. It is intriguing that students in their final year in a business school, with no understanding of what their school has provided them

with, and with doubts about their admission to it, claim they were forced to study at business school.

6.3.2.1 Context

From the demand side of stakeholders, employers showed limited knowledge of what graduates of business schools can offer them. Their expectations were more directed toward the university than the business school and its area of study, which supports the point discussed when answering the first research question, i.e. that business schools and universities are not typically distinguished from one another.

The goal of taking up a managerial position informs the need to obtain relevant work experience, while the majority of business school graduates study at undergraduate level. An employer interviewee [SE3] is of the view that graduates of business schools are of less value to employers because they lack the requisite experience for managerial positions. There are no studies showing a rise in the uptake of postgraduate business and management degrees, or whether any increase of uptake tends towards practitioners' degrees, such as MBAs, or the more academic degrees. Statistics issued by the Ministry give only the number of postgraduates in business and management, without specifying areas of study (MOE, 2016b). At the time of writing, universities are still not disclosing the number of enrolled students per area of study. This means there are no available statistics to base research on and researchers must depend on information provided by interviewees. This is why the aim of this study was to explore stakeholders' views of business schools.

From a social perspective, the parents of students tend to use their own experience and the wider voice of society to influence their children's choices. In some cases, they use their wealth or contacts to get their children into what they believe is the best institution. The significance of wealth is evident when they are seeking admission to private universities (as the admission process is relatively easier) or when funding their children to study abroad. The choice of private universities was discussed by a senior academic in the Ministry, who stated that it offers an alternative to parents who still believe in the abilities of their children to follow a particular course even when they do not meet the admission criteria. Specific reference was made to medical schools whose admission criteria are the most demanding and restrictive.

The main pool for the workforce currently comprises university graduates under Saudisation initiatives (AlAsfour and Khan, 2014). Private sector organisations are also expected to clarify the qualifications required for each job. However, the size and structure of the labour market, as discussed by two employer interviewees [SE1, SE2], continues to be developing, and is expected to include a larger number of professional private organisations. The interviewees highlighted the fact that the mainstream consists of small businesses requiring only a low skill level. Employment statistics reveal that the larger private sector companies that typically require more professional and specialist skills are concentrated in the banking and oil industries (GAS, 2015). A lack of awareness of the relevance of course studied was evident among the employers interviewed, as none referred to specific functions or departments that might be linked to essential skills expected of business and management

graduates [SE4, SE3]. In general they referred to business school qualifications, without citing specific areas of study needed, such as marketing, human resources and finance.

6.3.2.2 University key roles

For demand stakeholders, teaching related expectation were discussed through the role of teacher. This role is deemed to be most important by employers and students. It is as if the performance of the university or the business school has been conflated with the performance of the teacher in the mind of the student [SS1] and employer [SE3]. The reputation of a university or a business school is heavily dependent upon the employment of good teachers.

The involvement of the private sector in academic research is an endeavour worthy of additional investigation, in order to understand the mechanism by which the current relationship between businesses and universities is formed. Interviewees from businesses grouped under the ‘Employers Stakeholder Group’ were asked about recruiting students mainly from business schools, due to the relationship between the labour market and business schools. They were not asked about the potential relationship that emerged through research projects; nor did they offer any views of their own. This indicates less interest in the reputation for research by the employers who were interviewed.

6.3.2.3 The extended potential

Students’ expectations of business schools are limited to their experiences within the school and they appear to be mainly concerned with employability. One student [SS2] claimed that in certain cases it is harder to get a job interview when one has graduated from certain

schools. He insisted that some universities are perceived by employers as having a lower status than others. Students' [SS3] discussions about teaching and extracurricular activities all focused on the issue of employability and the features that make them most appealing to employers. The significance of future employability as a factor that determines the course of study was reflected by the students themselves, their teachers, the business schools, and potential employers. As so many students in their first year of study apparently feel that they have been forced to study a particular subject, it is perhaps to be expected that several in their final year express a similar view. However, the fact that the majority of final year students is still questioning the value of their course of study requires further investigation

This is similar to parents' views, as the key point raised in their discussions related to how employable their children would be after graduation. One parent [SF2] was more concerned with the area of study than whether his children would be employable once they left university, but he too acknowledged that graduates of some universities are more employable than others.

In contrast to the above, some corporate bodies are seen as having fulfilled their social responsibility agenda by funding research projects at universities rather than by benefiting from the outcomes of such research. A positive example of corporate funding awarded to universities is endowment projects (Alharthi, 2014a). Universities and business schools are largely freed from the pressure of manipulating or directing their research to please funders such as the tobacco industry (Bero, 2005). Employers are expected to be in direct contact with universities and engage with their outcomes.

The aspect most discussed in beyond three missions category was the administrative process. The students interviewed mentioned poor administration as being one of the unnecessary struggles that they have to overcome while studying. One student [SS2] mentioned another university that, according to a friend, has a better administration system. He appeared to believe that the better administration process was directly linked to the better reputation of the other university. The interviewee was at this point discussing unsatisfactory academic deliverables, so perhaps would have been more positive if his academic expectations were being met satisfactorily.

Expectation from demand stakeholders reflects their position. They show less interest to topics like governance, research, and funding of universities. Similar to supply stakeholders; they expressed interest to teaching, teaching materials and practitioner teachers. In most cases; their expectations were directed toward their personal or immediate benefit rather than the entire HE sector.

6.4 Implications of reputation

This section concerns the latter part of the research question, which looks specifically at the potential implications business school's reputation.

RQ2. How do a range of key stakeholders view business education and business schools in Saudi Arabia?

- What do stakeholders expect from business schools in Saudi Arabia?

- How do stakeholders use reputation to evaluate business schools and universities in Saudi Arabia?
- What reputational factors have a potential impact on business schools' strategies?

The most concerning implications of reputation raised in this research is the difference in perception among different stakeholders' groups. Certain aspects raise higher expectations with some stakeholders and lower ones with others. This section discusses each stakeholder group with regard to the implications of reputation.

For senior academics and policy makers (i.e. supply stakeholders), the implications of improved reputation are assumed to be linked to the level of support for business schools when proposing policies. As the current situation suggests, business schools have a relatively lower reputation than many other departments within the university. Typically, scholarship policies consider the transfer from an Engineering or Information Technology degree to a Business degree as a downgrade. An improvement in the reputation of business schools could change this and result in a transfer being seen as a transition to a field of equal status. More implications could be seen in the budget allocation for schools within universities and in the salaries awarded to academic staff. To date, employment contracts and benefits are centralised and unified across all public universities. Salary is decided on the basis of a standard scale, which takes into account years of experience and position held (such as assistant, associate, or full professor). Current indications suggest that if wages were to be

differentiated based on area of study, academics in business schools would receive lower pay than their peers in other schools.

Better reputation might not always be associated with positive outcomes. As seen in an interview with one academic [SA2], activities associated with an improved reputation might place pressure on the university to provide more than it is capable of producing. This view was investigated by Zavyalova et al. (2016), who concluded that striving for a better reputation could result in a negative effect. The possibility of contradictory outcomes and the associated effects on reputation make it important for a university to carefully assess and respond to feedback on activities promoting reputation, as seen in the discussion above.

6.4.1 Reputation and strategy

Reputation can be used as a driver to promote strategy and policy updates in universities (Steiner et al., 2012). This section will build on the discussion above that addresses the latter part of the research question designed to propose policy updates on how business schools and universities in Saudi Arabia might benefit from a good reputation.

It is important for policy makers in universities and business schools to understand and acknowledge that reputation is not a stand-alone objective and cannot be treated as an independent element. Any effort and action plans that seek to increase an institution's reputation should be conducted in conjunction with other core activities and other functions at the university.

At the very top level, senior consultants from the Ministry undervalue the importance of business schools and business education, framing the move from a natural science field of study to a management field as a downgrade. The warning of ‘disaster’ if the number of management graduates increases is a clear indication that business schools’ outcomes are not known or utilised in the country. In addition, in academia, business schools appear to be less well known among academics in other departments. It is not mandatory for academics from different disciplines to understand in detail what other departments are doing, but a certain level of knowledge and appreciation could prove beneficial and would form the basis of links between departments. As one interviewee [TA3] mentioned, other academics are well able to understand what business schools can offer when they get in touch with an academic from a business school at a university level committee.

One option mentioned was to enforce a strategic alliance between universities. In practice, some new universities were established from remote branches of old universities. The relationship between the two is not clear and nor is it well-publicised. From a reputational point of view, alliance is one of the strategies organisations used to improve their reputation (Petkova, 2012).

One of the key aspects requiring careful consideration relates to when reputation is studied and assessed. It is acknowledged that the importance and influence of stakeholders changes over time (Jawahar and McLaughlin, 2001), and the findings of this research seem to confirm that notion, as noted by a policy maker interviewee [SA2].

In this regard, one of the key suggestions is that business schools might consider how to distinguish themselves on two levels: within the university and across the areas of study offered in the country. The distinguishing of business schools is not an unreasonable demand, given the evidence presented in interviews that suggests business schools are less known. In fact, business schools and their outcomes are less known and/or acknowledged at different levels.

6.4.2 Prioritising stakeholders

One of the key issues associated with management practice is the need to be sensitive to the environment (Mintzberg, 2009); it is also important for business schools to be sensitive to the context in which they operate if they wish to improve their reputation. When examining this research area, it is important to acknowledge that stakeholders differ in their ability to influence business schools. Some are known to have decisional power, while others do not. This section will investigate this in detail.

Minimal attention seems to have been paid by previous researchers to students' views on admissions criteria in certain institutions, as discussed by more than one senior academic [SA1.2]. In this regard the student stakeholder group can be classified as a discretionary stakeholder as the group has legitimacy but no urgency nor power (Mitchell et al., 1997). Universities in Saudi Arabia have traditionally been often over-subscribed, as the number of high school graduates is greater than the capacity of the universities. Other HE institutions are also inundated due to the high demand, as discussed earlier.

However, respondents in this research pointed out that the importance of the role of students as stakeholders has demonstrably changed in recent years and that their views are expected to be given more importance in the near future, in the light of university expansion programmes leading to a surplus of university seats (MOE, 2016a). According to interviewees from the supply side of stakeholders [SA3] and [SA2] this would be an important move forward to acknowledge the importance of demand side of stakeholders. This means that the stakeholder group of students is more likely to be classified toward dominant stakeholder.

Senior academics are considered as dominant stakeholders as they enjoy both power and legitimacy (Mitchell et al., 1997). It is suggested that academics (both teaching and senior) can be classified as discretionary leaning toward dominant stakeholder as the group has legitimacy and limited power that makes them in between the two classes (Mitchell et al., 1997). Academic respondents (interviewees) also stated that programmes and initiatives designed to increase students' awareness of the role of business schools have been put in place. This move from over-subscription to surplus places explains why Saudi business schools and universities are now more attentive to students' views and emphasise the importance of making students aware of their practices.

There is little evidence in the findings of this study to suggest that employers, as the beneficiaries of business schools (in the form of employees), are engaged in business schools' activities. The established relationship between employers and business schools is mediated by the students who apply the knowledge and techniques learnt in the universities once employed. However, greater attention has more recently been placed on developing a

relationship between universities and employers in the form of designing cooperative programmes and regular meetings. Similar to students it is suggested that employers can be classified as discretionary stakeholder as the group has legitimacy but no urgency nor power (Mitchell et al., 1997). Any developments in this relationship will doubtless affect the relationship previously established and mediated by students.

The families of students engage with society once their children attend universities. As mentioned in the context specific section in the Findings chapter, families and parents do have a say in students' selection of university and discipline. In this regard, a senior academic commented that the concerns of parents should be addressed. He stressed that when families trust in the university they are more willing to allow their children to travel further away to complete their degrees. This is a clear indication that the families' role is acknowledged, but at the same time, there is no specific agenda to target them.

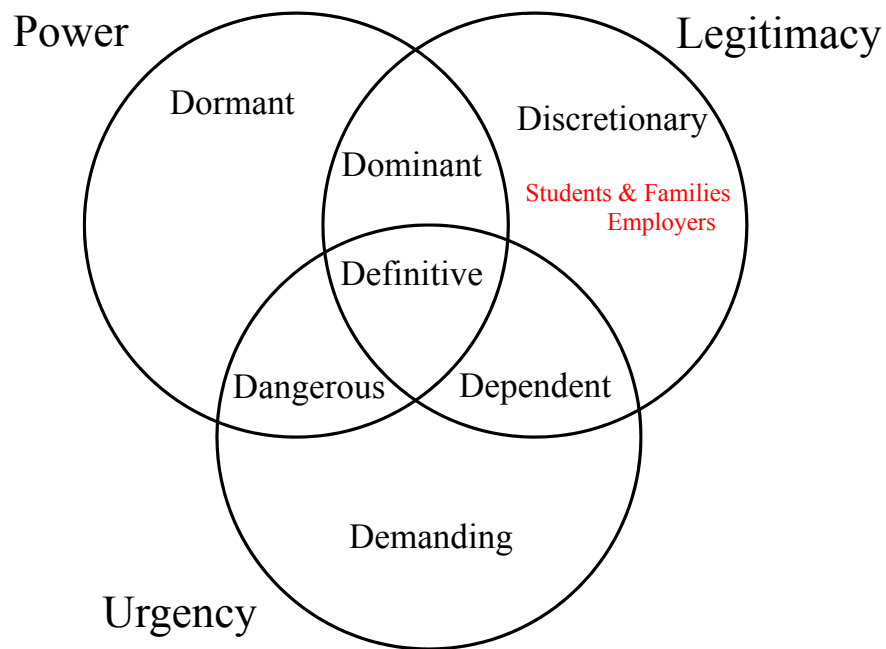


Figure 17 Students, Families, and Employers classification

It is necessary to acknowledge that reputation as an indicator of preference might be of lesser importance to some groups than others. Therefore, there is a need to target marketing and initiate communications and describe research projects to prospective students who are principally concerned with future employability. It is also necessary to understand that some stakeholder groups have relatively lesser awareness of the importance of reputation indicators and their benefit to them; thus, it is necessary to communicate their significance to those groups.

6.5 Opportunities for Saudi Arabian Universities and Business Schools

This section concerns the latter part of the research question, which looks specifically at the potential outcomes arising from a business school's reputation.

RQ2. How do a range of key stakeholders view business education and business schools in Saudi Arabia?

- What do stakeholders expect from business schools in Saudi Arabia?
- How do stakeholders use reputation to evaluate business schools and universities in Saudi Arabia?
- What reputational factors have a potential impact on business schools' strategies?

It discusses opportunities to improve universities and business schools' attractiveness and reputation. Opportunities can be either reached through core university functions or by going beyond them. The following sections detail various available opportunities.

6.5.1 Re-consider core functions

This section considers the opportunities to improve reputation through discussions that took place primarily in relation to the dimension of 'Being Known for Something' (Lange et al., 2011), and concerning the three missions of the university. It will highlight areas in which improvements can be made to increase business schools' and university's reputation.

6.5.1.1 Teaching and practitioner teacher

Teaching and teachers comprise the most salient topic and stakeholder group in this thesis. One of the challenges facing business schools is the shortage of qualified faculty members (Cornuel and Thomas, 2007). There are no official studies or published figures regarding either the availability or shortage of academic staff in Saudi business schools. The discussions about practitioner teachers in private business schools (see discussion in the findings chapter) suggests that recruiting qualified academics is a challenge.

Another benefit of using practitioner teachers that was brought up in discussions relates to the potential for a flow of knowledge and techniques between academia and practice. Policies and regulations could always exist to increase cooperation and integration, but having individuals able to access both environments would strengthen this relationship, regardless of existing policies (Anderson et al., 2017).

The discussion presented has proven that there is a positive attitude towards employing practitioner teachers, especially among people working in the Ministry. The contradiction between the appreciation of the importance of this and the desire to avoid provoking policy change is an indication of the slow nature of the decision making process and the delays in adapting to the needs and trends in the HE industry.

6.5.1.2 Distance learning

Some aspects are considered to be a form of societal engagement, such as the ‘Intisab’ (i.e. Saudi name for the local distance learning scheme) programme, which was viewed negatively

by some and positively by others (Redpath, 2012). This difference in perception is a clear indicator that such attributes should be subject to additional caution if they are to be used to increase reputation. Overselling these attributes could then become a threat rather than an opportunity. ‘Intisab’ is an example that reveals how the communication between university and society emphasises benefits and success stories.

Distance learning was discussed by the interviewees from the supply side of stakeholders [TA3] and [SA2] and the legalisation of distance or online learning is an example of the trend forward. In 2014, the Ministry of HE held its Annual HE Expo on the theme of distance and online learning (IECHE, 2014). It was also rumoured following the author’s graduation from Liverpool University’s Online MBA in 2010 that local accreditation of some leading world online programmes was soon to be forthcoming. To date, there has been no official statement either confirming or denying this intention. In fact, the only locally accredited online programme was the one offered by the Arab Open University (AOU, 2016). Some local universities are also currently offering alternative study programmes that allow students to follow lectures from home and hand in their assignments electronically. They are still required to be physically present for final exams and to complete some on-campus activities. Interestingly, despite these restrictions, online programmes, especially MBAs, are gaining greater popularity and are more widely recognised by employers (Mondello, 2012).

6.5.1.3 Research

The second core activity of most universities is academic research. The biggest four Saudi universities tend to enjoy a perceived higher status with regard to research than the other

universities (i.e. King Saud in Riyadh, King Abdulaziz in Jeddah, King Faisal in Dammam, and Umm Al-Qura in Makkah). Another specialised university, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, was also brought up by this group and was referred to by more than one interviewee. These universities are considered to be the main research focused institutions in Saudi Arabia (Mazi and Altbach, 2013).

However, this is not the case in Saudi Arabia, where the role played by universities as research institutions was not a principal topic of interest in the interviews and discussions.

This lack of awareness of the significance of research on the part of employers during the discussions clearly indicates it is not among their expectations of a university and, for them, is not associated with improving or establishing a university's reputation, that explains the lack of interest from employers discussing universities and raises concerns about communication and understanding between universities and businesses. This is in sharp contrast to universities in the rest of the world where research dominates the construction of reputation, particularly through rankings (Safón, 2009, Baden-Fuller et al., 2000, and Armstrong and Sperry, 1994)

With regard to the lack of research on HE and the impact of this, the findings suggest that no official research has been undertaken to date as noted by senior academics working at the Ministry [SA4.1, 2, 3]. Academics working in research centres expressed an interest and intention to expand their research portfolios to include additional activities. A similar intention was discussed by a policy maker in a business school [SA2], who observed that the university he works at is planning to enquire about and analyse the performance of its alumni.

It is worth mentioning here that the Ministry of Education keeps published records for HE in Saudi Arabia. Their records show the number of students in each university classified by gender, area of study, and degree level (MOE, 2016b). However this data set requires interpretation and should be used in conjunction with labour force data available from the General Authority of Statistics, which is a government body (GAS, 2015), to better understand the impact and effect of HE on the labour market. It is also important to listen to both official and independent voices regarding assessments of the efficiency and impact of the HE sector. One way to do this is to present official research statistics and records relating to areas of study, recruitment, income and so on. Independent research could also be more socially oriented and encourage input on questions designed to understand the extent to which university study influences work experience.

On the basis of the discussion above, it can be concluded that the contribution of research as a core activity in HE, relative to the reputation of universities and business schools in Saudi Arabia, is minimal. This research does not provide sufficient evidence to suggest that reputation is constructed through excellence in research in the Saudi Arabian context, although there are indications that research could be used to promote reputation in the future and that Saudi business schools should pay more attention on developing research outputs as a means of enhancing their future reputation.

6.5.1.4 Society Engagement

Engagement with society in general was the third most widely discussed mission of the university. Furthermore, an important aspect raised by stakeholders related to the social role

of universities. The literature discusses the impact of areas of engagement between HE institutions and society (Morsing and Sauquet Rovira, 2011). The following sections outline key aspects of the relationship between universities and society, as discussed by the interviewees. Research represents a university's core activity and, internationally, both business schools and universities have been criticised for focussing on research at the expense of teaching (Besancenot et al., 2009).

6.5.2 Beyond the core

'Being Known for Something' is not limited to the three missions of the university as discussed in the literature. The discussion identified a number of additional areas relating to the choice of universities and business schools. These areas were seen as indicators of quality and in some cases provided a significant contribution to stakeholders' choice to confront, or avoid, a specific business school or university; e.g. administrative and non-academic functions. Moreover, they were viewed as a criterion for preference and comparison. This draws attention to the fact that these aspects represent potential opportunities for business schools wishing to improve their reputation.

Arguably, the university campus and the surrounding facilities contribute to different aspects of the university. No explicit reference was made in the interview guide to the campus, its buildings and facilities, but they did contribute to the general preferences expressed by stakeholders.

Both universities and business schools as parts of universities have policies and procedures in place to manage their activities. However, there is a considerable variation in the practice and execution of such procedures. Responses to bureaucracy in some cases indicate the importance of the first impression received when initially engaging in a direct relationship with a university, leading to the validation, or negation, of all previous assumptions and expectations. Students that encounter the university admission process have typically not had any prior contact with the university and so bureaucracy forms the basis of their perceptions of the university. Business schools can participate in improving the national recruitment process.

6.5.2.1 Geographical factor

A further issue that was mentioned that is linked to choice of course is related to the geographic location of the school. Different stakeholders mentioned the location of the university as key to their choice. One employer commented that, from his experience, graduates from the same city as the university they attend are generally less likely to drop out. He commented that this is probably because they have family around them and are therefore more settled [SE5]. The views of parents are presented earlier and there is a clear preference that daughters should study close to home. One student interviewee [SS2] reported moving from a university perceived as having a better quality to a local one to be close to home. The university he moved from has a good ranking in worldwide rankings and is acknowledged by the Ministry as being research-led (Al Eisa and Smith, 2013), while the one he moved to is a newly established one (MOE, 2015c). The implication of these findings is that social factors are important and sometimes prioritised over quality factors.

6.5.2.2 Public sector tailored programmes

It might be beneficial to introduce recognised programmes into business schools to serve the public sector. Although the Saudi government is the largest Saudi employer, there is no programme designed to equip graduates specifically with knowledge of the policies and systems used in government departments. The programmes available are offered by the Institute of Public Administration, which is a government agency targeted at training public sector employees while they are on the job, especially those in middle management positions (IPA, 2016). Such a programme, when offered by a business school, would serve a dual purpose. The first would be to increase the alignment between graduates and market needs. As noted by an employer interviewee [SE4], entry level jobs in management are few and, therefore, more specially equipped graduates would be ideal. The second objective would be the provision of a platform to professionalise the public sector (IPA, 2016), which is an area that requires investigation.

6.5.3 Reputation and trust

Reputation and trust are closely intertwined. It was discussed previously that the choice of university is linked to trust by both families and the Ministry. This indicates a logical and positive relationship between trust and reputation (Fischer and Reuber, 2007). From another angle, being mistrusted increases the load placed on managing an organisation's reputation. While it seems logical that mistrusted organisations would have a lesser reputation, the bigger challenge is that their positive acts might be perceived negatively and thus serve to support their lesser reputation rather than improve it. As noted by one interviewee [SA2],

messages lacking credibility could then backfire, destroying their good reputation rather than enhancing it.

Building trust is not directly linked to building a reputation. Hence, when the trust element is present, reputational messages should be more cautious (Fischer and Reuber, 2007). Though, trust is considered as an important factor of choice when it comes to university (Iyengar and Lepper, 1999). An example of this was apparent in the findings, where an interviewee perceived a reputational element in a negative way, because he had no trust in the university. He negatively viewed activities engaged in by the university as it endeavoured to engage with society, because he saw these as a deviation from its core mission of ‘teaching’, which was already not being handled well. His view was that if they were not doing what they were meant to do effectively, other activities constituted a waste of resources and only served to mislead the public about the university.

As stated previously, one of the key aspects of reputation is the objective that one should be better than one’s competitors in the same industry. Saudi universities are frequently openly criticised for being identical copies of each other (AlEsá, 2011). In this regard, it is important for business schools and universities to ensure they have compelling features that help them transcend their rivals. These features should then be highlighted, communicated, and always made present.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the research outcomes, details key contributions the study has made to the field, discusses areas for future research, highlights areas where alternative approaches could have been beneficial, and offers a final comment.

Returning to the initial framework presented in figure 1, showing the simple overview of this research. It can be updated to the below figure showing the complexity introduced throughout the research.

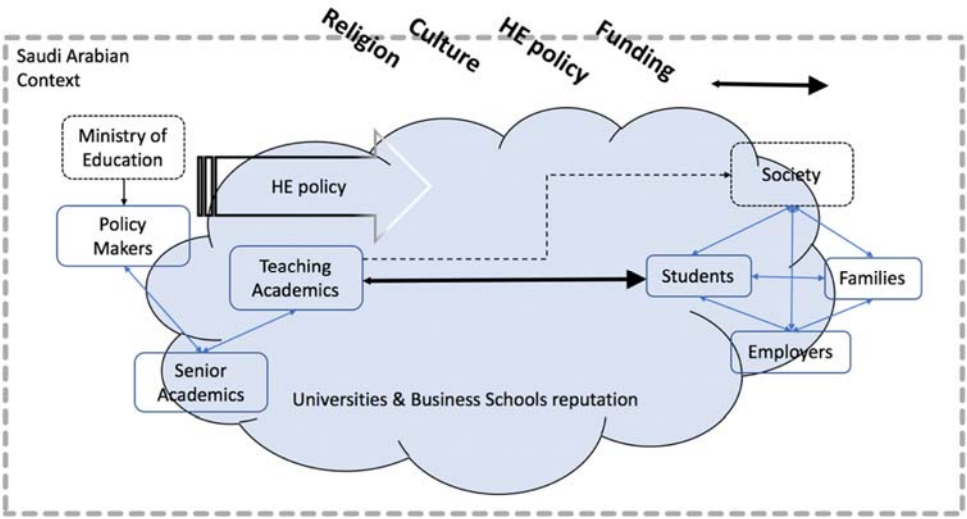


Figure 18 Overview framework

The framework indicated that interdependencies and a complex network of relationships exist between stakeholders, and between supply and demand groups. The reputation of universities and business schools is presented to demonstrate that it is not an independent phenomenon, nor one that has clear boundaries. This updated overview was made possible through a conceptual framework derived from the literature review, as presented in the figure below.

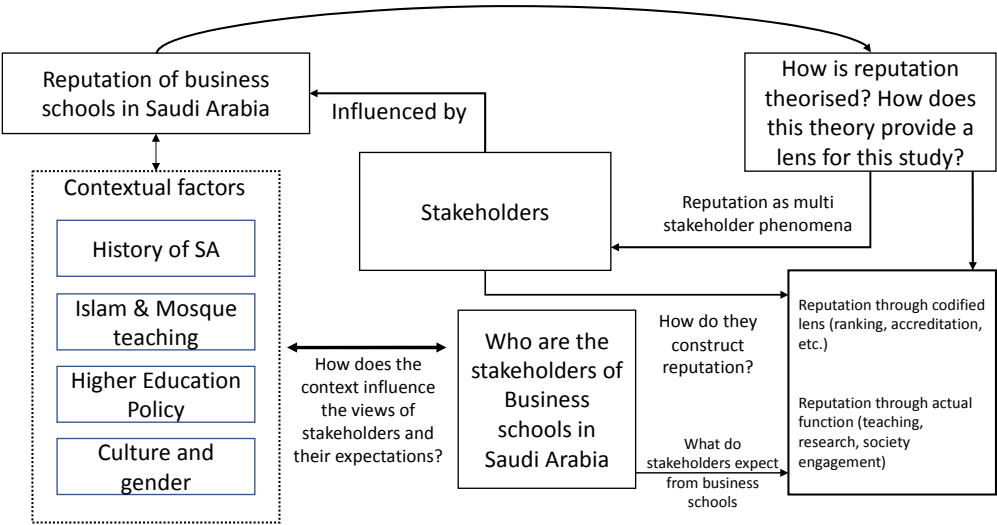


Figure 19 Conceptual Framework

7.2 Research contribution

This research makes a contribution to existing knowledge in the following ways:

In terms of the study context, Saudi Arabia undoubtedly lacks research in the social sciences and humanities. HE is an emerging and developing phenomenon in Saudi Arabia, making it an attractive research topic for researchers wishing to conduct projects across a range of

different disciplines. Prior to this research, Saudi Arabian business schools have not been the subject of extensive academic study. This study has shown that any research investigating business schools in Saudi Arabia should be carried out in the context of the cultural and religious backdrop of the country. This means that it is difficult to compare studies of UK and US business schools (e.g. Rindova et al., 2005, Corley and Gioia, 2000, and Cornelissen and Thorpe, 2002) with those carried out in SA as the contextual factors have a much greater impact in how universities are run and how HE is perceived. As has been shown in previous studies (e.g. Mazi and Altbach, 2013, Darandari and Cardew, 2013, and Al-Shahrani, 2016); HE in SA is developing in a distinctive manner and has only comparatively recently adopted a strategic approach to how HE can help the kingdom develop. Furthermore, HE is largely publicly funded and the focus on revenue generation is not as great as in current US and UK business schools. This also means that rankings and accreditations do not carry as much weight in terms of creating the virtuous circle of business schools being able to attract higher levels of income and raise levels of quality.

In terms of theoretical background, this study on organisational reputation and business schools' reputation is based on the frameworks presented in previously published studies, such as Rindova et al. (2005), Safón (2009), and Boyd et al. (2009) that have defined and assessed elements or aspects of reputation. This research used the categorisations for aspects of reputation found in these studies as a guide when exploring the Saudi Arabian context. The study did, however, take a somewhat different approach from previous research as it became clear that a model developed for research in a US context (e.g. Rindova et al. (2005) could not be rigidly applied in Saudi Arabia.

For example, Rindova et al. (2005) perceived quality (Being Known for Something) as a dimension of reputation that did not provide justification for paying a higher premium for a business school, although 'Being Known for Something' as an element that constitutes reputation is important when choosing a business school. This was clear from references made by the interviewees when discussing the quality of teaching, teachers, and teaching materials when referring to the selection of a preferred university or business school. This makes an additional contribution to HE research, one specifically related to establishing a theoretical foundation (Tight, 2004).

Empirically, this research makes a novel contribution by assessing reputation while carrying out primary research with immediate stakeholders in Saudi Arabia. Using open ended interviews helped extend the spectrum of aspects of reputation resulting in the emergence of some unanticipated aspects, such as practitioner teachers' importance (which has not to date been acknowledged by senior academics elsewhere).

Furthermore, the study also offers a contribution to policy makers involved in decision making in reference to business schools in Saudi Arabia and how they might improve their reputation and appeal. Policy makers' decisions would target to increase the acknowledgment of business and management as a professional practice. This acknowledgment at the top level would eventually cascade to other stakeholders.

Methodologically, the research contributes to three different areas. Firstly, it offers an advanced form of template analysis, as discussed by King (2012), where key points involved in developing the template were identified in three versions of the template. Secondly, the

process used when dealing with Arabic text involved having both the original verbatim version and the translated text present while coding and analysing to provide an extra layer of confirmation to guarantee that the meaning was understood. An example of a transcript is attached in Appendix 4. Although there has been some interest from other researchers³ in the practice of coding in two languages, there is no research published using this technique to the best of this author's knowledge.

Thirdly, by suggesting an improvement to software compatibility and integration. Increasingly, researchers are using CAQDAS software, which provides good tools to handle attachments. Reference management software also works well with attachments. The problem researchers face is that they might have two sets of journal articles full of notes and annotations, one in the reference managers and the other one in CAQDAS. An integrated solution, such as the one proposed, will save the researcher precious time and effort.

7.3 Suggestions for further research

This research opened up a rich vein for further research and has made a significant contribution to our understanding of both reputation and the reasons informing students' choice of course in the context of business education in Saudi Arabia. Most importantly, it has opened up scope for potential research projects with the capacity to directly impact and

³ The researcher was interviewed by Dr. Bill Lee regarding a research project about using two languages in a research project and he was interested in the method used here.

advance business education, both short and long term. Some areas for further research proposed on the basis of the findings of this study are:

A possible area for further investigation is the relationship between business ethics and Islam, which was only touched on very briefly in this study, this could be mapped to Ghoshal's (2005) seminal study linking ethics to business practices. From a theological perspective, the role of commitment to good deeds in Islam suggests a potential area of exploration in terms of religion and emphasis on ethics in business, as discussed by Kant (1724-1804) and more recently by Sullivan (1994). Classifications of what is ethical practice differ between religions and religious communities. In the Reference case of Islam, Prophet Mohammed's role translates as:

I was sent to perfect honourable morals.

(TTI, 2007)

This is seen in another translation as:

I was only sent to perfect good character.

(Hasan, 2010)

However, the complexities of the Arabic language mean neither of the translations above versions fully reflects the actual Arabic phrase. Understanding the ways in which Islam prescribes ethics and morality would improve contextual sensitivity when conducting research on business ethics in the Saudi context. It might also provide greater understanding

of how business ethics can best be promoted and evaluated in Islamic countries, and add to existing literature about the country (e.g. Al-Shahrani, 2016, and AlEsá, 2011).

Additional potential avenues of research emerged at the theoretical level from the interaction between stakeholder and reputation theories. An area worthy of investigation would be the link between the expectations of an organisation's stakeholders and the recognised outcomes of that organisation using Bourne's (2012) steps of engaging stakeholders as detailed in the literature review chapter (see section 3.5). The same research approach could also address business school's potential to manage or influence expectations in order to enhance reputation. This research offers a promise to be interdisciplinary, as researchers from psychology and marketing domains might gain from a clearer understanding of public choice.

Methodologically, qualitative and quantitative research are fundamentally different in ways that extend beyond the data collection method employed. Since this research is purely qualitative, it would be beneficial to apply some quantitative measures to establish a grounding for further research. It was not possible to carry out a quantitative study in this instance due to the need to develop large data sets and the relatively small number of potential respondents available at the beginning of the research period. However, such a study could now be conducted by researchers based in Saudi Arabia and potentially carried out or funded by the Ministry for Education, based on the findings of this study, particularly the identification of key stakeholders. This could inform the future development of business schools and business education general.

At the most basic level, the data published by the Ministry of Education provides a wealth of potential secondary source for studies into HE trends in Saudi Arabia. The data set itself could also be of value if broken down according to specific categories. For example, in large stakeholder groups, such as students, preliminary quantitative studies could be employed to identify preference, determine rankings in terms of choice and high school scores as a tool for further investigation benefiting from secondary data available such as MOE (2016b) and expanding them with more attributes through primary data collection. This was highlighted in interviews with different stakeholders in this research, as enrolment in business schools was determined mainly by the outcomes of high school and ‘Qiyas’ grades. Additionally, a quantitative study could complement this one, by building on its findings to individually measure chief reputational elements and variables to produce causal or relational findings. This would also build on and extend Safón (2009) study where causal reputation study was conducted on limited stakeholders groups and at MBA level only. This is still an area that necessitates careful consideration because it is time and context dependent, and any quantitative research needs to account for the many variables and mediators affecting the relationship.

Another possible area to consider for further research would be historical. Since business schools in Saudi Arabia are a relatively new phenomenon (KSU, 2016b), a historical study on the development phases of business schools, in conjunction with the attendant social and economic changes might prove valuable. Such a study might also reveal to what extent business schools are involved with, and embedded in recent socioeconomic changes highlighted in publications such as Morsing and Sauquet Rovira (2011) where they covered

business schools' contribution to society in different contexts, Saudi Arabia and similarly characterised countries were not present in this publication. Interviews with senior academics and policy makers suggest they have the potential to deliver exceptional input in this area. The outcomes of any such research would help us to understand the impact business schools have had on the economy and vice versa.

More closely related to the research topic, this research confirmed differences between stakeholders, and argued that there exists a dynamic process of reputation construction among stakeholder groups; therefore, one area for further research would ideally be the systematic study of change in reputation perception over a period of time across different stakeholder portfolios. This research could benefit from different stakeholder types and their influence to organisations (Slabá and Štarchoň, 2014) in conjunction with other social (Guimarães and Sampaio, 2013), economic, or political studies to inform future understanding of the reasons for any change in reputation. It could then be carried forward as a basis from which to develop a proposal to increase institutions' reputations.

This research confirms the willingness among stakeholder groups to engage in a relationship with institutes based on reputation. Any additional research could therefore explore how reputation affects choices from different angles, such as satisfaction and choice validity (Orlitzky and Swanson, 2012). The results might then provide an important shift in our understanding of reputational constructs.

Some initiatives and projects engaged in by universities are thought to contribute significantly to reputation. For example, with endowment projects, technological incubators,

extra curricula modules; it is necessary for research projects to have quantifiable life cycles, to facilitate the process of critically evaluating their successes (Rusinko, 2010). It would therefore be important to extend this research by assessing how such projects benefit the different stakeholders involved. Any such research should aim to investigate failure stories as well to highlight potential hazards, so these can be avoided in future projects.

There are aspects proven to contribute to the image of business schools', such as MBA programmes (Argenti, 2000). Despite the discussions and debates that surround them, the debate over MBA programmes is yet to reach Saudi Arabia. Thus, an MBA programme could be a good vehicle to reach a larger audience and potentially spark the interest of individuals across all the stakeholder groups consulted for this study. For example, employers might gain access to additional channels to interact with business schools through MBA programmes.

In the first instance, policy makers at business schools should account for the critiques and debates around MBA programmes. They should also acknowledge the similarities and differences that validate or nullify those critiques.

Further research could therefore investigate and map the development of research in Saudi Arabia. The areas of research and publication record are also worthy of investigation, as there are interesting records regarding increase in publications in specific areas (SCIMAGOJR, 2016). Exploring this by leading on from this thesis would help researchers to investigate growth and development in published research from Saudi Arabia in the Business and Management fields. Such a study would then serve to reveal useful information and ignite beneficial suggestions in different ways.

The relationship between HE institutes and the media also requires investigation (Tess, 2013). It would be beneficial, therefore, for interdisciplinary researchers to use theories developed in relation to media, education, and reputation to investigate this relationship. Research concerning the relevance of the media on HE in Saudi Arabia has been limited to date, but there is widespread potential for such research.

It is important also to more extensively consider, the position of stakeholders who are not related directly to business schools or universities. Some of these might also offer potential benefits that were otherwise hidden or undetected by this study. For example, information from experts on the nature of competitiveness between businesses in the same industry could serve to benefit business schools.

7.4 What would I do differently?

It is interesting upon reaching the conclusion to a research journey to pose the question: If I were to repeat this research, would I perform it in the same way? This section will outline some avenues not pursued that might have augmented the value of the study.

One of the first aspects to address concerns the selection of interviewees and the classification of stakeholders. For example, in the student stakeholder group, this research only considered students currently studying in a business school setting. Prospective students form an important group, which was not considered in this research. Students from other departments within the same university could provide comparative data to balance the data

garnered from business and management students and to investigate their motives to study in areas other than business and management.

The employers in this research were grouped as private and public sector employers, without differentiation. Although the researcher did not aim to detail the differences between the employers' groups, sufficient evidence emerged to suggest the presence of differences worthy of investigation. Within the public sector, the use of contracting companies, and what is referred to as the 'operation system' adds another perspective when discussing how recruitment is managed.

The private sector can be undervalued when conceptualised merely from the perspective of a single stakeholder group. The private sector is organised into multiple dimensions and clusters. Clearer differentiation can be achieved in terms of size, industry, and governance. Corporate bodies are established with employee strength as high as 150,000, while single-employee companies exist as do freelance professionals and some small shops. Industry can play a role as well. Some industries are closely related to business schools' outcomes. These include the banking and financial services sectors. Others sectors have a supportive function (e.g. the construction industry) and may interact less, or show less interest in business schools' outcomes. There may also be clear differences that could be anticipated in results if the type of private sector organisations featured in the research were to differ. Family businesses, government-owned companies, limited companies and joint stock companies vary in many aspects, which in turn influence their relationship with universities, with the result that each type of relationship differs.

7.5 A final Word

Throughout my own years of managerial experience, I have learned through practice that moving towards a shared goal is one of the best paths to embark upon to solve workplace conflicts, increase productivity, and come closer to perfection. While conducting this research, I came to realise that having reputation as a goal can feed into all activities engaged in at the strategic level. I recommend that while setting goals and determining the ultimately achievable objectives of an organisation, reputational factors must be considered.

At the operational level, activities might be expected to include reputational factors that would reduce the difficulties inherent in linking them to strategic goals.

For me, this research has answered a number of questions and in doing so, has opened up a number of areas for future research; this area of investigation has the potential to generate many serious research projects. As I heard once in my early days as a PhD student: all the world's problems cannot be solved with PhD research, so it is wise to pick a specific topic and tackle it properly. This is what I have tried my best to do. Deviations and ways to expand out from my initial objectives proved manifold in all the areas I explored: theoretical, methodological, and contextual.

I hope that this research will be for me a first step towards future research enabling me to make contributions to benefit business schools and HE in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East.

7.6 Post script: Vision 2030

In April 2016 the Saudi government announced the 2030 national vision, delivering a transitional and reformative vision for the entire country (Vision2030, 2016b). The discussions around possible changes to the Saudi economy, triggered by the public announcement of Vision 2030, clearly indicated that dependence on oil as the principal source of the country's income is now undesirable. Thus, there is a clear intention going forward to increase the role of the private sector and to privatise some government agencies and functions. This will necessarily mean that more people will need to work in private sector organisations instead of public ones.

Indeed, all government bodies are now revising their plans to align with the 2030 vision. Up to the point at which this thesis was ready for submission, no plan had been revealed for a business school in the country to comply with Vision 2030 goals. I would argue that the outcomes of this research are therefore compatible with Vision 2030, and that they extend to business schools the potential for a greater role in the nation's future.

After completing the fieldwork for this research and during the final writing up stage, I was in contact with a friend involved in the national 2030 vision (Vision2030, 2016a). He mentioned that some projects are underway to initiate leadership training for senior level government employees. This discussion supports my observation in this thesis that management as a profession and professional managers are not yet publicly and officially recognised.

As the country is moving towards a more diversified economy, there is now potential for increased engagement by the private sector. Business schools and HE institutes would then also benefit from their engagement.

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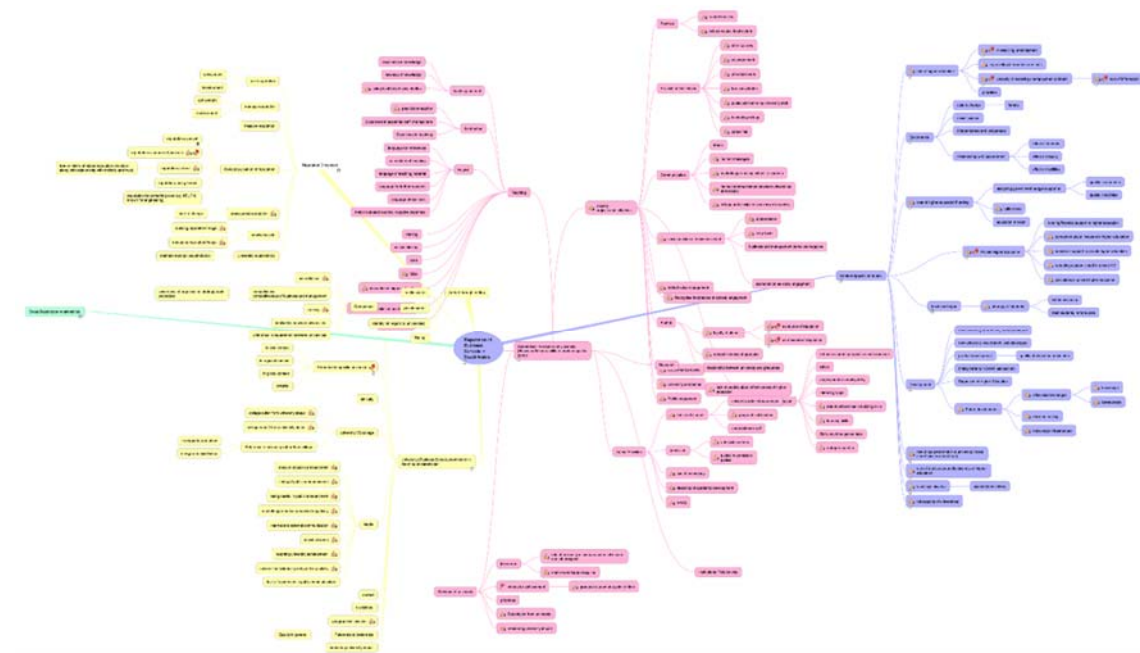
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Appendices

Appendix 1: First draft mind map



Appendix 2: Interview Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

Business Schools in Saudi Arabia

You are being invited to participate in a research study about business schools and business education in Saudi Arabia. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask me if you would like more information.

The purpose of the research is to explore the business education environment in Saudi Arabia's business schools in the light of emerging literature and debates about business education in developed countries such as the U.K. and then predict the future trend of business education and practice with potential improvements. The research will consider the following areas:

- **What** is the current situation of business and management Higher Education in Saudi Arabia?
- **Why** business education is conducted in this model? backgrounds, perceptions, history?
- **How** can we improve business education and business/management practitioners?

The research will take place in different forms depend on your occupation.

- **Business practitioners and senior authorities:** face-to-face one session interview with the researcher himself.
- **Instructors in business school:** Interviews and informal discussions when the researcher interacts with instructors and engaged in dialogs and discussions.
- **Students:** Interviews throughout the course period.

The participation is totally voluntary and you should not feel pressurised to take part nor to answer questions in any particular way. Taking part in the research is risk free and no potential harm is expected to either researcher or participant. The topics to be discussed in the interview should not cause any emotional or mental harm.

Your participation will seek your opinion and understanding of business and management as your field of study and how you see yourself in this area. Your participation has nothing to do with the course you are studying and will not affect your marks by any means.

Only interviews will be voice recorded and notes will be taken during the interviews and other research activities. If you are uncomfortable about being tape recorded please tell me and I will be happy to discuss alternative methods of recording the interview.

The results of the research will appear in a dissertation and will be kept in the University of Liverpool library. If you are interested in the results of the research and interested to have more information about, please let me know and I will share the findings and research highlights with you.

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to get in touch with me using the contact information below and I will do my best to help. If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel we have not resolved then you should contact the Research Governance Officer on + 44 151 794 8290 (ethics@liv.ac.uk). When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make

Contact information:

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Appendix 3: Consent form



CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: Business and Management Education in Saudi Arabia, Perceptions and Future

Researcher(s): Ibrahim Alharthi

**Please
initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated April 19, 2013 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected.
3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.
4. I agree to take part in the above study.

☐☐☐☐

_____	_____	_____
Participant Name	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Person taking consent	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

The contact details of lead Researcher (Principal Investigator) are:

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+ 44 7428612757

Appendix 4: Sample transcripts

Interviewee: KFUPM, CIM Dean and department heads

Duration: 75 Minutes

Key facts:

- AACSB accredited business school
- Participated in many nation wide plans and initiatives
- Highly trusted by Gov

Person	Verbatim	Translation
Ibrahim	* اريحية	More easy
	ايه سجل اذا تبغى،،	Yes, record if you wish
	بس كمناطق، في امريكا ال Business school is prestigious	As a start, in the US. Business schools is prestigious
	بس في المانيا ال Business school is not prestigious	But in Germany, business school is not prestigious
	it is dominated by engineering	It is dominated by engineering
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - المجتمع قد يتأثر بأشياء تاريخية، مثلا في نفس الوقت عندنا في السعودية، stereotyping major و field - وايضا، what was prestigious at some period of time is not prestigious at another period of time - بس فس تحسن كبير،، في وقت من الأوقات، كان ينظر لإدارة الأعمال 	<p>Society could be influenced by some historical things. For example, here in SA we have stereotyping for major and field. Also, what was prestigious at some period of time is not prestigious at other period of time.</p> <p>But there is a great improvement. In a previous time , business administration was looked at as something, literature, but now there is a development.</p>

	<p>أنها شيء أدبي بس الآن يمكن في تحسن،</p> <p>-</p>	
	<p>- أنت تسجل الآن</p>	Are you recording now?
Ibrahim	<p>- اي</p>	Yes,
	<p>- تاريخيا في السعودية، ال connection between Higher Education institutes and society is negligible</p> <p>- it was not even mandatory,because at that stage is really graduating graduates with university degree is most important and if you are doing that,, you are achieving.. because we basically started from Zero,,</p> <p>- if you think about</p> <p>- بدايات جامعة الملك سعود،</p> <p>- بدايات جامعة الملك فهد حوالي ٦٠ طالب يعني ما هو بالأعداد الكبيرة فكانت الجامعات مشغولة بأنها تؤدي العمليات التعليمية في بناء الكوادر المؤهلة للوطن، والأمور الأخرى لم تكن موجودة.. وحتى عالميا، كانت موجودة ولكن ليس بهذا الزخم الموجود حاليا،</p> <p>- من بداية التسعينات، أعتقد بدأ يتواجد احساس ان دور الجامعة اكبر بكثير من تخريج طلاب،، is the most important all ways</p> <p>- ولكن دورها في المجتمع مهم أيضا،،</p> <p>- فيأتي الآن التطبيق،، يو جد اشكالية في التطبيق، من جهات كثيرة.. منها انه</p>	<p>- Historically, in SA.. connection between Higher Education institutes and society is negligible</p> <p>- it was not even mandatory, because at that stage is really graduating graduates with university degree is most important and if you are doing that,, you are achieving.. because we basically started from Zero,, if you think about..</p> <p>the beginnings of King Saud University,, the beginnings of KFUPM around 60 students. Which not a lot. Universities were busy in the education role. preparing the cadre for nation. Other stuff were not there. Even globally, it was there but not with this momentum.</p> <p>- From early 90's I believe it started to acknowledge that the role of universities is much more than graduating student. Graduating students is important all the ways. But its role in society is also important. Now we come to implementation. We have challenges in implementation in many ways. Some of them that you have an institution that have a,,, that is really isolated and not connected to the outside world and now you are asking the institution to change this culture</p> <p>- as we know, ,change culture is always difficult</p> <p>- the other thing that you dont have a tradition of engagement with community,,</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - you have an institution that have a,,, that is really isolated and not connected to the outside world and now you are asking the institution to change this culture - as we know, ,change culture is always difficult - الامر الآخر انه - you dont have a tradition of engagement with community,, - 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - يجي السؤال الآن - what is this engagement - what do i need to engage with them - فأعتقد ان الجامعات - generally الأعمال من ضمنها،، are learning - we are learning fast, - not only learning to engage, but learning what areas that we need to engage in - عندنا في الجامعة،، we want to engage engagement - need to be added value, associated with the mission of the university and need to be highly connected to the role of university - لانه في engagement easy - يعني we can engage in offering short courses, volunteer work, basic social charitable work, free consultation to 	<p>Now comes the question,, what is this engagement? What do I need to engage with them. I believe, universities generally, and business schools as part of them are learning. We are learning fast. Not only learning to engage, but learning what areas that we need to engage in..</p> <p>Here in the university we want the engagement, but the engagement need to be an added value, associated with the mission of the university and need to be highly connected to the role of university. Because there are easy engagement. Like, we can engage in offering short courses, volunteer work, basic social charitable work, free consultation to some entities and young people,, and so on.</p> <p>But the question is: if this can be done by a high school or an institution, is this really your role?</p>

	<p>some entities and young people,, and so on</p> <p>- if this can be بس السؤال done by high school or institutions,</p> <p>- is this really you role?</p> <p>-</p>	
Ibrahim	- امممم	Hmmm
	<p>- thinking in university, we are ... the university emphasise major issues that are related to whole,,</p> <p>- our engagement need to be along these lines</p> <p>- also engagement need to be,,Higher Education, in general</p> <p>- ولذلك الجامعة، دائما عندها مبادرات،،</p> <p>-</p> <p>- فكان فيه، طبعا الجامعة the culture في الجامعة لأنها صغيرة،، الكليات ما هي معزولة عن بعض،</p> <p>- initiativesa lot of</p> <p>- تكون على مستوى الجامعة، حتى ولو كانت</p> <p>- derived by one of the colleges,</p> <p>- that need to be known, it is not like, college of business is swimming on its own,,</p> <p>- فكان الجامعة لها مبادرات، هنا نعتقد انها مهمة مجتمعيًا، رغم انها high level</p> <p>- فالجامعة تبدأها ثم تنتشر،،</p> <p>-</p>	<p>Thinking in university, we are .. the university emphasises major issues that are related to whole. Our engagement need to be along these lines. Also engagement need to be,, Higher Education in general.</p> <p>That's why, the university always has initiatives.</p> <p>There was, in the university. The culture, because the university is small, colleges are not isolated from each others. A lot of initiative where at the university level.. Even if it was derived from one of the colleges. That need to be known, it is not like, college of business is swimming on its own, etc.</p> <p>The university had initiatives, we believe they important for society, even though, they are at higher level.. The university started them, then they spread.</p>

Appendix 5: Unpublished conference paper

Knowledge Sustainability in Higher Education in Saudi Arabia

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This paper will examine the issue of knowledge sustainability as viewed by various universities and business schools in Saudi Arabia and as articulated through their publications and websites. It will investigate whether sustainability is present (and if so, the extent to which it is present) in these institutions - either as a distinct approach or embedded within their development plans and missions –

Sustainability in Higher Education can be seen from different levels and perspectives. This study will look at the Higher Education and school levels and will mainly consider the knowledge perspective. It will assess how universities can create environments for sustainable knowledge development and implementation. The paper will suggest a model of sustainability for

integration into Higher Education, based on the current circumstances of Higher Education institutions and the different influences they may have. Recently many universities in Saudi Arabia have initiated endowment projects as an alternative to government support for supplementing universities' funds; these endowment projects can be seen as evidence of sustainability in financial terms, and it would be possible to use this to understand how these institutions conceptually perceive sustainability in education. This paper will draw on the experience of universities motivated by the concept of financial sustainability to look for knowledge sustainability. It is claimed that most universities are not contributing significantly towards knowledge creation and advancement because of their perception of themselves as teaching universities; their main role since their inception has always been to teach. Most teaching materials in Saudi Arabian universities were taken from leading western universities with only minimal adaptation to suit the local environment and labour market needs.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is dependent on oil income; many projects to overcome this dependence have been proposed, the change in national GDP for oil dependence still does not reflect significant shift from oil dependence in the country.⁴ One of the first sectors to strive for endowment projects was Higher Education; many projects for universities like KSU and KFUPM have been implemented.

The highest authority in the country, the King, has realised the importance of knowledge and expanded universities and developed a massive scholarship program.

Sustainability as a term is usually associated with environmental concerns and it is much present in Architecture Studies and recent developments in Architecture and Construction.

Sustainability in Higher Education could be viewed from different angles. For example, Sustainability in Higher Education facilities, Giving Sustainability a prominent place in the syllabi of Higher Education courses, Sustainability in the financial income of Higher Education institutions, and sustainability in the knowledge available in these institutions.

This paper is concerned with efforts of some universities in Saudi Arabia in establishing endowment

⁴ <http://mof.gov.sa/Arabic/DownloadsCenter/Pages/Statistics.aspx> (accessed May 24, 2014)

projects. The most prominent among them is King Saud University in Riyadh. The endowment project of this university is documented and publicised on its website and further disseminated through different publications. This paper will explore these publications to understand how the endowment projects are meant to serve sustainability from two angles: financial sustainability and knowledge sustainability.

There appears to be no commonly accepted definition for the term 'financial sustainability' and the parameters seem to differ depending on the context of discussion. However, a working definition of financial sustainability could be attempted by understanding it as the pecuniary state of an organisation which is able to have uninterrupted income resource. 'Knowledge sustainability' as a term does not have a common use too, but it is used here to refer to continuous loops knowledge adaption, creation and dissemination within the university.

The Higher Education community is becoming more connected and its members somehow share similar threats. Accreditation bodies and international ranking put more pressure on universities to implement what is currently perceived as the best model in practice. A serious criticism that this approach faces is that when the 'best model' is directly imposed on all institutions, the results are not always as positive as expected. This is perhaps because institutions vary from one another in many different aspects, and adopting the same model can sometimes be a threat and not an opportunity for growth. For example, many critiques and debates regarding the responsibilities of business and management education institutions in the climate of a financial crisis figure in the articles of several scholars in widely spread articles like: Bad Management Theories Are Destroying Good Management Practices⁵, And in some books like: Managers, not MBAs: a hard look at the soft practice of managing and management development

Universities in Saudi Arabia are undergoing unprecedented development projects in most aspects of their structure. The number of public universities shot up from only nine before 2001 to more than

⁵ Ghoshal, S. "Bad Management Theories Are Destroying Good Management Practices." *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 4, no. 1 (2005): doi:10.5465/AMLE.2005.16132558

twenty seven by 2014⁶. This number is expected to increase in the near future. Some small branches of larger universities are given autonomy to create new universities. As a result, these new universities have the privilege of their own budget and development projects; the increase in construction projects taking place in both old and new universities is an indicator of this. Another facet of such development is evident in the increase of employment in universities. This increase is also partly due to the flagship scholarship programmes for Saudi Students to study abroad. Many of them have received job offers during their studies for Higher Education degrees⁷.

In terms of quality assurance and academic rigour, The Ministry of Higher Education has established the National Accreditation Centre whose responsibility is to ensure that all universities adhere to an acceptable level in academic standards. Some universities are taking the lead toward gaining international accreditation and many have succeeded in doing so. Some of these universities are:

King Saud University in Riyadh (KSU)⁸

King AbdulAziz University in Jeddah (KAU)⁹

King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM)

King Abdulla University of Science and Technology (KAUST)

These universities are also known to have endowment projects and financial aid besides the direct funding from the government in the form of an annual budget. Among them, KSU with a dedicated website and a periodical, is the most suitable one for academic study and will be used as the case for study in this paper. KAU is partially present in the public domain through a page under the main university website, where the information is not as rich as in the case of KSU; their project are also

⁶ www.mohe.gov.sa

⁷ www.mohe.gov.sa (accessed May 24, 2014)

⁸ www.ksu.edu.sa (accessed May 26, 2014)

⁹ www.kau.edu.sa (accessed May 26, 2014)

not of the same magnitude. As this paper is not concerned with a comparison between different universities, it will not take the case of KAU any further. KFUPM has announced its endowment project and is known to have a research institute that generates income for the university through industry related research, especially for oil companies, but it is not clear how the research institute is contributing with the university's financial scheme.¹⁰ KAUST is also known to have its own investment arm, a specialised company called KAUST Investment Management Company, but it is not present in the public domain and there is minimal information available to the public.¹¹

In this paper, King Saud University Endowment project will be used as a model for analysis and the argument of this paper will be built from the information about this project available in the public domain. The two main sources of this information are the official endowment website, and the specialised periodical issued by KSU endowments. The website is in both Arabic and English and has the following pages: Home, Introduction, Vision, Mission, Objectives, Projects, Endowment Magazine, Endowment Progress, Sponsors, and Photo Gallery¹².

Due to the pioneering nature of such an endowment initiative in Saudi Arabia, it is important to understand how it is presented to society, and by doing so, also understand how it is perceived by those who are not involved in the initiative. The magazine has published three issues so far. The first issue was in February 2009, and the second and third were in January 2010 and January 2011 respectively. There is no mention of why the publication of this magazine was discontinued after these dates; there is also no mention whether it has only been suspended temporarily or totally withdrawn. Since the magazine was published in Arabic only, all quotes and paraphrases from it in English are translations by the author of this paper.

¹⁰ www.ri.kfupm.edu.sa (accessed May 28, 2014)

¹¹ www.kaust.edu.sa (accessed May 28, 2014)

¹² <http://endowment.ksu.edu.sa/> (accessed May 26, 2014).

The mission of the magazine as stated in the opening issue is: (1) to respond to the demand of a wide range of people who are seeking knowledge about the different aspects of the endowment through professional channels and media; and (2) to increase the knowledge and awareness of the public about the importance of endowments and how they impact different aspects of our lives.

The opening report about the KSU project in the first issue of the magazine the report was titled “A bond of human solidarity in sponsoring a knowledge society”. Titles are usually indicators of the most important aspect of any written piece; when it is mentioned in the title that a knowledge society is the focus, it means that these projects reflect the university’s mission of bringing about a knowledge society. The goal of the endowment projects is to supplement the financial resources of the university. It is also claimed in the report that the endowment projects will have an impact on the activities that raise the profile of the university among the top universities. The financial support was seen as beneficial particularly to the university through:

- A source to fund operational expenses, so as to have more managerial and financial independence;
- Stable financial resources to encourage research and development, and an important source to fund technical and advanced medical research;
- Protection from any instability in the national economy;
- Help in supporting the long term operation and research budget for the benefit of future generations;
- Infinite value for beneficiaries if established on a sound economic basis..

In general terms, endowments were seen to support and improve the education process through:

- Attracting a better cadre in education and research, resulting in better education output;
- Supporting and expanding infrastructure without overloading the university budget;
- Providing financial support to develop staff through specialised courses and new teaching technologies.
- Attracting scholarship students with exceptional talents, knowledge and

capabilities.

- Hiring new staff to deal with work overload in some courses .¹³

The first issue of the endowment magazine contains an interview with Prof. Al Othman, the former rector of KSU and a member of the KSU Endowment Higher Committee. Prof Al Othman highlights in this interview some issues that are of relevance to this paper. The philosophy of the endowment project comes up as one of the key aspects of social partnership between the university and the society; the endowment project is seen as a parallel to the university's vision, which is to be world-class and lead in the development of Saudi Arabia's knowledge society¹⁴. The expected contribution of the income from endowment projects is seen as inspiring the motivation of the university to be lead in research excellence; it intendeds to allocate 60% to scientific research, 25% to the support of university hospitals, and 15% to charity projects within the university.¹⁵

The endowments projects acquired huge investments and all of them were from the private sector with encouragement and support from government and highest authorities in the kingdom. This is an indication of how much reach the university has into influential groups within the wider society, and how they have been persuaded to donate generously to its endowments projects. This initiative also sends out a signal that there are areas in Saudi society which need to be explored and utilised. The passion for knowledge and for high academic standards seen among wealthy groups and top business leaders in Saudi society could be representative of the passion that exists within many other groups or communities with less wealth.

As seen from the examples above in publications related to the endowment project, the university

¹³

<http://endowment.ksu.edu.sa/sites/endowment.ksu.edu.sa/files/%20الأوقاف%20العدد%20الأول%20صفر%201430هـ.pdf> (accessed May 24, 2014)

¹⁴ <http://ksu.edu.sa/en/about-ksu/mission-vision> (accessed May 26, 2014)

¹⁵ <http://endowment.ksu.edu.sa/sites/endowment.ksu.edu.sa/files/%20الأوقاف%20العدد%20الأول%20صفر%201430هـ.pdf> (accessed May 24, 2014)

and the endowment projects seem to share the same mission, vision, and goals. As the university is a place of knowledge and education, there is a general expectation that all its activities would be geared to development in these fields. While the university is looking for financial sustainability and financial independence through creating its own financial resources, it also needs to devote as much, if not more, attention to the way it handles its knowledge development and creation. In most cases, the intentions of the university in this regard appear to be reflected by the concepts it gives importance to, such as “knowledge society” and “research and development”, when discussing the long term benefits of endowments.

Given the limited amount of public information available about how the endowment project will be operated and given the latest updates regarding its status, we could conclude that the commercial operation of the project has high potential of success due to several reasons. For example, the nature of project and the standard at which it has been carried out so far serve different purposes and meet a high and increasing demand in Saudi society. Real estate investments usually need less complex attention and effort from the investor to achieve return on investment. The names appearing in connection with the endowment projects discussed above have a rich portfolio of success in their own businesses and it is likely that their capabilities and experience will translate into success in the endowment project. Some of these names are given below

- Saleh Kamel, founder and owner of Dallah Albarakah, which is one of the largest companies in Saudi Arabia. “The company started in 1969 as a small proprietorship and has evolved over a period of forty years into a diversified international conglomerate, incorporating investments in billions in over 40 countries worldwide. The group impacts on almost every sector of economic life, including trade, real-estate, finance, healthcare, transportation and maintenance and operation. Dallah Albaraka started its operation in its early days in the field of general services and maintenance, introducing a pioneering example in the

contribution of private sector to the public sector's duties and responsibilities.”¹⁶

The company is also one of the sponsors of this conference.¹⁷

- Saudi Bin Ladin Group, started by Mohammed Bin Ladin as a contracting company, afterwards grew to be one of the largest construction and contracting companies in the Middle East.¹⁸ The project is named after its founder, Mohammed Bin Ladin, whose much preferred title was “Al-Muallim”, which in Arabic literally means “The Teacher”. The company is also one of the sponsors to this conference.

As the KSU was in a pioneering position among the universities and Higher Education institutions in Saudi Arabia to benefit from endowment projects, and had paved the way toward financial sustainability and stability, it could take the lead and use the concepts and lessons learned from different activities it had engaged in, such as: endowment projects, accreditation practice, a ranking competition to get the best of both. This could initiate a model of knowledge creation and a university with distinct identity that can make significant mark in creating knowledge and in promoting curriculum innovation rather than curriculum import from other countries. Their case could be then benchmarked and its lessons used by other universities, provided that these universities benefit from the experience and do not try to copy it.

There was also a hidden message from the suspension of the previously mentioned endowment magazine by KSU and an indication of how important is communication to society and create awareness of endowment projects importance, especially if we notice the opening of the first issue by the editorial team claiming that in crowded of publication there is no any specialized issue about endowment and related topics. The university should continue the effort of the first three issues and adhere to its message in the first issue.

As coming to the knowledge side of sustainability, universities should aim to: increase the adaptation of imported teaching material to local needs; drive student research projects toward creating knowledge rather than only reflecting on case studies; and enhance currently existing

¹⁶ <http://www.dallah.com/en/Pages/Index/3> (accessed May 24, 2014)

¹⁷ <http://grm.grc.net/index.php> (accessed May 24, 2014)

¹⁸ <http://www.sbg.com.sa/profile.html> (accessed May 24, 2014)

internship programs with clear measures for knowledge acquisition and linkage between theory and practice. In the long term, universities should aim to increase their input into teaching materials and gradually aim to locally produce the cutting edge knowledge in field. For increasing the potential of sustainability plans, universities should carefully work out measures and backup plans. Those measures should be in both working agenda and assessment afterward. It is important to measure and build in success rather than claim to have achieved sustainability objectives without having them integrated in the curricula, in the teaching, and in the research projects of the institution.